

**THE THRONE AT ALL COSTS: POWER AND SURVIVAL IN THE  
HASHIMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN**

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### Thesis Abstract

This thesis will study the *modus operandi* King Husayn used during his reign to stay in power and improve Jordan's strategic importance despite his limited margin for maneuver in a region surrounded by possible enemies. In order to provide an historical context, the first chapter will outline the reign of Abdullah, Husayn's grandfather, and the second will briefly cover Husayn's reign.

The next three chapters are case studies of events in Husayn's reign in which he had to react to challenges to his reign. The first of the case studies is the year 1956, when Husayn attempted to enter Jordan into the Baghdad Pact, and then was forced by popular unrest to give up attempts to join the pact. During the same year he fired his Army Chief of Staff, former British Army Lieutenant General John Glubb in order to shore up domestic support. The next chapter will cover the events of 1970, when Husayn forced the Palestinian Liberation Organization out of Jordan. The final case study covers Husayn's actions during the Gulf War of 1990-91, when the majority of the Jordanian population supported Saddam Husayn.

The thesis concludes that King Husayn looked to the short term during his reign. Because of his limited options and his country's militarily stronger neighbors, he had to react to the threats that presented the most immediate danger to his throne. When his reign was threatened, he did what was necessary in order to survive as king of Jordan. As he became more experienced, he learned how to manage his delicate domestic support base, and continued to maintain it throughout his 46-year reign. These abilities helped to make him the most durable leader in the modern Middle East, and made his modest country a strategic player in the region.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis my mother, Carolyn Fink, who lost her battle with cancer two years ago. She was my first and favorite teacher, and she kindled my interest in learning about history. I know she was with me as I wrote these pages, and she continues to be an inspiration to me.

Robert E. Friedenberg  
Princeton, New Jersey  
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### **A Note on Transliteration**

In writing this thesis, I used common forms and spellings of most names and places (i.e. Nasser, Mecca, and Jeddah) with the primary exception of the name, "Husayn." The western version of the king's name (Hussein) is used when it appears in a work used in the thesis. All titles of Arabic sources used are spelled employing the transliteration rules found in *The International Journal of Middle East Studies*.

## Foreword

I shook King Husayn's hand a year before he died. The occasion was a Jordanian Army Special Forces capabilities demonstration, and the promotion of his son, Abdullah to Major General. I had not expected to meet Husayn. As a relatively junior American army officer, I was treated as a guest at the event, but not seated up in the front seats under the colorful Bedouin tent. Those seats were reserved for the VIP's, mostly senior Jordanian officers and foreign military attachés. I sat in the back, and strained to see what was going on. After the exercise, King Husayn stood up and went to a podium to address the audience. His Arabic was difficult for me to understand, but beautiful to listen to. Although the podium mostly obscured his small frame, he radiated power, and so appeared much larger than he actually was. He was dressed in a paratrooper's uniform, with the red beret of the Jordanian Special Forces. He also wore the bright gold wings of a pilot.

I had read a great deal about this king. As a teenager, he watched his grandfather assassinated in the holy city of Jerusalem, at the time part of the Hashimite Kingdom. He ascended the throne only a few years later, after his father Talal was declared mentally incompetent. When other 18-year-olds were driving cars and chasing girls, he was a king, and was making decisions affecting millions of people. He overcame attempted coups and assassinations. For over forty years Husayn ruled Jordan, and remained when other Arab leaders were overthrown or murdered. He was a survivor in an area of the world where survival is difficult.

As Husayn finished his speech, a young Jordanian soldier yelled "*Aish Husayn!*" (Life to Husayn!) The other soldiers answered in unison, "*Aish, Aish,*

*Aish!*” in loud succession, and the roar made the tent shudder. These soldiers truly loved their king. He left the tent and guests formed a receiving line to pay their respects. I didn’t expect to participate, but one of my classmates in the Jordanian Infantry Advanced Course, a Bedouin Special Forces major who had friends in the Royal Guard, motioned for me to get in the line. I had hoped I could meet the king during my yearlong assignment in Jordan and had thought about what I might say to him if I ever met him. I wanted to ask him how he managed to keep his throne for almost half a century while other Middle Eastern leaders were assassinated or exiled. I wanted to ask him what it was like to watch his grandfather murdered. I wanted to know what it was like to be a king before his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday.

I never asked him those questions. The line moved quickly, and it would have been inappropriate for a junior American officer to speak to him in that manner. I merely nodded and greeted him in Arabic. But those questions remain with me, as does my interest in Jordan. This thesis is an outgrowth of these questions.



## Introduction

In his book *The Jordanian-Palestinian Relationship: The Bankruptcy of the Confederal Ideal* (1998, British Academic Press), Musa Braizat contended that Abdullah, the first Hashimite king of Jordan, followed a strategy with three core tenets throughout his entire reign. One: Jordan and Palestine must always have a special relationship. Two: A flexible attitude to Israel and Zionism is the only way to blunt Zionist intentions toward Jordan. Three: the support of Great Britain is crucial to the survival of Hashimite Jordan.

Joseph Nevo, however, disputed the notion that Abdullah had a coherent plan, and maintained that he was acting one step at a time. In *King Abdullah and the Palestinians* (1996, Macmillan Press), Nevo wrote that Abdullah enjoyed the game of chess and was a good player, but his efforts to expand Transjordan were better described as a game of backgammon. Instead of looking ahead several moves, he simply reacted to events. As in backgammon, the role of chance was also important.

It is worth asking if the same arguments could be applied to Abdullah's grandson, Husayn. Husayn's reign was fifteen years longer than Abdullah's, and he survived more challenges, both internal and external, to his rule. Could he have been successful for so long just by playing backgammon? Or was he using a more coherent strategy, able to look past surviving immediate crises towards a long-term goal for his kingdom?

The late Uriel Dann noted five elements in Husayn's survival strategy.<sup>1</sup> The first is that crises must be dealt with as they are met: tomorrow's crisis can wait until tomorrow. The second is that domestic popularity was essential for Husayn's survival. The third rule is that while it is important to have powerful allies, one may have to temporarily alienate them in order to maintain domestic popularity. Dann's fourth rule was that Syria is an enduring threat to Jordan, and Jordan must placate Israel in order to maintain peace. Finally, Dann maintained that control and loyalty of the Jordanian army was Husayn's prime asset in surviving as king.

With the exception of the enduring Syrian threat, all of Dann's points will be borne out in the three case studies in this thesis. But rather than forming a long-term plan, they are better described as simple axioms. Dann's first rule negates the possibility of thinking in the long term. Loyalty from the army must be listed first in the order of rules for survival. Popularity with his subjects, both Transjordanian and Palestinian was important, though Husayn would not fully understand this until after the Baghdad Pact Crisis in 1956. In 1990, Husayn temporarily forsook his most powerful ally, the United States, to support Saddam Husayn. He gambled that he could solve his short-term challenges and later get back in to the good graces of his superpower benefactor. The Syrian threat is still a possibility, but seems to have lessened since 1970, and the two countries are currently on more friendly terms.

King Husayn did not use a long-term survival plan. Stronger regional powers surrounded his kingdom. He was always dependent on global powers, such as Great

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<sup>1</sup> Uriel Dann, *King Hussein's Survival Strategy*, Washington: The Washington Institute For Near East Policy, 1992, pp. xii-xiii.

Britain and the United States. For these reasons, he had a limited margin of maneuver in his policies. Husayn mastered the art of balancing threats, both internal and external. He weighed the degree to which each threat could affect his reign, and he reacted to the most urgent threats. Threats appeared and disappeared during the course of his 46-year reign. He adapted his policies and diffused threats by co-opting or allying with their source. Husayn's actions during the Gulf War clearly illustrated this when he joined with the majority of Jordanians to support Saddam Husayn.

These abilities made the king a powerful force in the Middle East. By his death, his country, a weak nation in comparison to its neighbors, was a strategic force within the Middle Eastern political framework. Jordan's geography is partly the reason, but the tactical shrewdness of its King was also an important element. Husayn was a master of overcoming his country's weaknesses and countering his enemies' strengths; his actions affected an entire region, and influenced superpowers.

This study will test the thesis that King Husayn used a coherent strategy during his long reign to stay in power and maintain Jordan's importance in a region where potential enemies surrounded the small kingdom. In order to provide an historical context, the first chapters will briefly outline the reigns of Abdullah and Husayn. The next three chapters will analyze in depth three case studies that illustrate the tactics that Husayn used and lessons he learned. The case studies cover three critical events in Husayn's career: the period of 1955-56 when he rejected the Baghdad Pact and dismissed Glubb Pasha, Black September in 1970 when he kicked the PLO out of Jordan, and finally his refusal to join the coalition against Iraq in the 1990-91 Gulf War.

Why is this study relevant to policy makers today? Husayn's son Abdullah learned a great deal from his father and one can expect him to emulate his father's style of rule. He is already charting his own course, though, by cracking down on Islamic activists who at times Husayn cultivated.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Abdullah has learned that the most important lesson is not to rigidly follow his father's plans, but to follow his father's willingness to look to the near future and to change his policies when they did not meet his needs. He also apparently understands the delicate balance of support for the monarchy within Jordan, and what he needs to do what is necessary to maintain it. Knowing this, United States policy makers can more clearly understand the decisions made in Jordan.

King Husayn ruled a country surrounded by stronger, richer neighbors, who all threatened it at one time, and he outlasted every challenge. He also outlasted challenges that came from within his kingdom. King Husayn's reign was successful; its longevity is testament to this fact. But success is more than just longevity. When he assumed the throne, Jordan was a marginal Middle Eastern country, still controlled by a colonial power. By his death, Jordan was a critical lynchpin in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Husayn's ability to make his country a strategic regional actor is also testament to his success as a leader.

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<sup>2</sup> *Washington Post*, October 7, 1999, p. A24.

## Chapter One

### Origins: Abdullah and Transjordan

#### Timeline

February, 1882-	Abdullah born in Mecca
August, 1914-	World War I begins
Fall, 1915-	Husayn-McMahon Correspondence begins
February, 1916-	Arab Revolt begins
November, 1917-	Balfour Declaration
October, 1918-	Faisal (Abdullah's brother) enters Damascus
July, 1920-	Faisal forced to flee Damascus
September, 1920-	Abdullah arrives in Transjordan
April, 1921-	Abdullah becomes Amir of Transjordan
1936-1939-	Arab Revolt in Palestine
May, 1946-	Abdullah becomes King of Jordan
May 14, 1948-	British withdraw from Palestine
May 15 1948-	Arab Armies enter Palestine
July 11, 12, 1948-	Lydda, Ramle fighting
April 3, 1949-	Rhodes agreement ends 1948-49 War
April 1950-	West and East Bank unified
20 July, 1951-	Abdullah Assassinated in Jerusalem
11 August, 1952-	Talal deposed by Jordanian Parliament

Abdullah ibn Husayn was born in February 1882 in Mecca, in what is now Saudi Arabia. At that time it was the capital of the Hijaz, a *vilayet*, or administrative region, of the Ottoman Empire. Abdullah was the second son of Husayn ibn Ali, and Abdiyya bint Abdullah. He belonged to the Quraysh tribe of the Hashim clan, and claimed a direct line of decent from the Prophet Muhammad. Abdullah's mother died when he was four years old, and his great-grandmother and great-aunt raised him. At the time Abdullah was born, his uncle was *Sharif* of the city of Mecca. All direct descendants of the Prophet Muhammad could claim the title of *Sharif*, but only one man could hold the title of *Sharif* of Mecca. The man who held this position was

responsible for the holiest city in Islam and the annual religious pilgrimage to the city. Along with the responsibilities came political power, and so there was a great deal of competition for the position.<sup>1</sup> Because the Ottoman Sultan controlled the area, he chose who would become *Sharif* of Mecca. In time, the title went to Abdullah's uncle.

Abdullah's father, Husayn, coveted his brother's title, and sought to curry the favor of the Ottoman Sultan in order to take his brother's place. In 1891, Sultan Abdulhamid II summoned Husayn to Constantinople as a result of the dispute between the brothers.<sup>2</sup> According to one source, the Sultan knew that Husayn had ambitions of forming an independent Arab kingdom, and ordered him to the capital to keep him under control.<sup>3</sup> Husayn remained in Constantinople for 12 years, and three of his sons, Ali, Abdullah and Faisal lived with him and received an Ottoman education. In 1908, Husayn succeeded in claiming the title of *Sharif* of Mecca. At the time, Husayn was a loyal subject of the Ottoman Empire. He was content to remain in the Hijaz and control Mecca. But as the new century progressed into its second decade, relations worsened between the Hashimites and the Ottoman Empire.

Prior to World War One, the Ottomans were preoccupied with war in the Balkans and in Libya, and had little time for the desolate provinces in Arabia. When the Ottoman Empire entered the war on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary, Husayn saw a chance to play the European powers against the Ottoman Empire in order to achieve Arab independence. His son Abdullah had remained in

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<sup>1</sup> Mary C. Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 20.

Constantinople working in the Ottoman Parliament. He had also begun to be interested in Arab nationalism. In March 1914, Abdullah returned to his father in the Hijaz to act as his foreign minister. On his way back to Mecca, Abdullah met with Lord Kitchner, British High Commissioner in Cairo, in order to explore the possibility of an uprising against the Ottomans.<sup>4</sup> After further negotiations with the British, and two years into the war in Europe, Husayn decided to support an Arab rebellion against the Ottoman Empire. He chose his sons Faisal and Abdullah to lead the revolt. On June 10, 1916, the revolt began.

Abdullah led his forces in the Hijaz, taking the cities of Mecca, Jeddah and Ta'if from the Ottomans. He then moved on the second Islamic holy city, Medina. There his offensive stalled. Meanwhile his brother Faisal, along with T.E. Lawrence, moved north, raising more troops from the Bedouin tribesmen on their way, and won several victories, including seizing the port of Aqaba from Ottoman control. Faisal wanted to take Damascus, and reached it on October 3, 1918. Australian troops were already occupying the city, but British commander General Edmund Allenby, acting under direct orders from the British Government, allowed Faisal to set up a provisional government in Damascus. The French would later control Syria as the result of an agreement called the Sykes-Picot Treaty, which split up the Middle East between the British and French after the war. But the French agreed to allow Faisal to run his own provisional government if he did it under French guidance.<sup>5</sup>

Abdullah succeeded in taking Medina in February 1919, after the war officially

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> David Fromkin, *A Peace To End All Peace*, New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1989, p. 335.

ended. Abdullah then stopped in the town of Turaba to refit his 5,000 troops. There he was attacked by 1,100 troops of Ibn Saud, a rival of the Hashimites for supremacy in the Hijaz. The *Ikhwan*, fanatically loyal followers of Saud, surprised Abdullah in his camp outside the city. He barely escaped the battle with his life.<sup>6</sup>

Abdullah was brave and very ambitious, but was not the field general his brother Faisal was, even given Faisal's assistance by Colonel T.E. Lawrence. Abdullah's inability to quickly take Madina was glaringly inadequate against Faisal's success in the north. Lawrence, who admired Abdullah at their first meeting, said of him, "*His value would come perhaps in the peace after success.*"<sup>7</sup> But Abdullah, while possibly lacking in military skill, was more politically inclined than his brother.<sup>8</sup>

Faisal represented his father at the Paris Peace Conference after the war, and fought to get an independent state for his father to rule. But the British and French out-maneuvered him. The result of the conference was the creation of the Mandate System, a compromise between real colonialism and Arab independence. Faisal returned to Syria, now a French-controlled mandate. The French had agreed to allow Faisal to remain in Syria if he accepted French rule. But he was outspoken about Arab unity and independence and the French saw him as a threat to their rule. Urban Syrian nationalists wanted independence from France, but they considered Faisal a Bedouin outsider. Faisal knew the French would put down a revolt, and tried to mediate between the French and the Syrian nationalists. Failing in this endeavor, he then tried

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 425.

<sup>7</sup> T.E. Lawrence, *Revolt in the Desert*, (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan*. p. 20.



to gain nationalist support by leading an ill-conceived revolt against the French.<sup>9</sup> On 26 July 1920, French troops occupied Damascus and forced Faisal to flee Syria two days later.

Abdullah was initially denied a chance to rule one of the mandates and was living in Mecca with his father. After learning that Faisal had to flee Damascus, Abdullah decided to reclaim Syria for the Hashimites. He boarded a train with between 500 and 1000 tribesmen on 27 September 1920, and headed for Ma'an, in the British-ruled mandate of Transjordan. He never got to Syria. The French feared he would stir up nationalist sentiment there, and asked the British to keep him out. Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill, in keeping with his "Sharifian policy," wanted to set up several small states in the region, all governed by members of Sharif Husayn's family and under British influence. Churchill wanted to avoid trouble with the French and at the same time maintain British control in the region.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, he offered Abdullah the position of Amir of Transjordan. His brother Faisal became the King of Iraq, the other British mandate. Abdullah never abandoned his plans to be king of "Greater Syria" but with the French in control, he accepted what the British offered him.

On April 11, 1921, Abdullah officially became the Amir of Transjordan. Initially, he only controlled the area east of the Jordan River. The British ruled Palestine, west of the Jordan. But Abdullah's ambition was to rule both sides. Unlike Syria, Jordan was mostly desert, and the fertile area West of the Jordan River would

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<sup>9</sup> Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, p. 435.

<sup>10</sup> Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, p. 27.

greatly increase the capacity of his people to improve their standard of living. Two different populations inhabited Transjordan. The Bedouins, the nomadic tribesmen who aided the British during the war, generally favored the arrival of Abdullah as their emir. The Palestinians, who lived on the West Bank of the Jordan River, also welcomed Abdullah's arrival initially. They saw him as a Pan-Arabist who would resist British rule and halt the effects of the Balfour Declaration, which lent British support to Jewish immigration to Palestine.<sup>11</sup> But Abdullah was more interested in working within the British mandate system than in driving the British out. Abdullah knew he could not achieve his aims in the area by working against the British.<sup>12</sup>

Abdullah began his rule in Transjordan with three objectives: to establish legitimacy and consolidate power, to mix authoritarian rule with popular representation in government, and to preserve Hashimite rule and influence in the Arab world.<sup>13</sup> He established the Arab Legion, initially a group of 750 men.<sup>14</sup> In order to maintain his influence with the Bedouins, especially the influential Bani Saqr southeast of Amman, and the Huwitat of Wadi Rum, he co-opted the tribes by composing his force completely of these tribesmen. British officers commanded the Legion, but Arabs had positions of importance in the unit, and it was the best organization to take advantage of their martial spirit and loyalty. In 1930, John Bageot Glubb left service with the British Army to take command of the Legion,

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<sup>11</sup> Joseph Nevo, Ilan Pappé ed. *Jordan in the Middle East: The Making of a Pivotal State 1948-1988*, (Essex: Frank Cass & Co LTD, 1994), p.61.

<sup>12</sup> Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan*, (London: I.B. Tauris & Co LTD, 1993), p.135.

<sup>13</sup> Arthur R. Day *East Bank/West Bank: Jordan and the Prospects for Peace*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1986), p. 16.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

and trained them into a cohesive fighting force. The Legion became Abdullah's most effective tool by maintaining control over the independent Bedouin tribes. Abdullah also established the close bond between the Legion and the king that would later serve his grandson Husayn so well.

Abdullah's primary ambition was territorial expansion. His dream was to unite Transjordan with Syria and Iraq under Hashimite leadership.<sup>15</sup> But along with his ambition, Abdullah possessed the ability to compromise in order to achieve at least part of his goals. When he realized that Syria and Iraq would not be so easily absorbed into his control, he turned his attention westwards, towards British-controlled Palestine.

From the post-World War One era to the beginning of the Second World War, the Zionist movement gained strength and despite British restrictions, more Jews moved to Palestine from Europe. Conflict between Arab and Jew became inevitable. The British attempted to control events, placating one side or the other at various times. Abdullah initially did not see the Jews as a threat. Instead, he saw them as a way to further his territorial ambitions in Palestine.

He began negotiations with Zionist leaders to convince them that he could form a Hashimite kingdom on both sides of the Jordan River with the Jews in a semiautonomous community similar to the Ottoman system. In the spring of 1934 he sent a proposal to the Jewish Agency, the unofficial Jewish government in Palestine, to unite Transjordan and Palestine under his rule, with two states in Palestine, one Jewish and one Arab. He promised to recognize Jewish rights and allow the Jews to

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<sup>15</sup> Alec Kirkbride, *From the Wings*, London: Frank Cass, 1976, p. 56.

maintain a legislative council and a Prime Minister subordinate to Abdullah.<sup>16</sup> These negotiations with Zionist leaders continued, until just before the 1948 War.

Abdullah's tolerance of Jews inside his kingdom may seem strange given the events that followed, causing so much acrimony between Jews and Arabs. But one must keep in mind that Abdullah's Ottoman education played a great part in his attitude to Jews and other non-Muslim populations living in the Middle East. The Ottomans allowed Jews and other non-Muslims to live in relative harmony (compared with the treatment of Jews in places like Russia at the same time) in what was called the *millet* system. In the Ottoman Empire, religious minorities were protected and allowed to live with a large measure of autonomy in community affairs, as long as they paid the Ottoman government a special tax. Abdullah planned to continue this tradition in Transjordan.<sup>17</sup>

Abdullah also felt he had inherited the right to rule the Palestinians in the West Bank. He expected they would accept his rule.<sup>18</sup> But Palestinian leaders, including Haj Amin al-Husayni, the *Mufti* of Jerusalem, felt that Palestinians should rule their own country. A *Mufti* is a senior Islamic legal scholar, and the position gave Haj Amin a great deal of power in Jerusalem. Haj Amin was appointed *Mufti* in 1921 by the British Governor in Palestine in order to placate increasing Palestinian nationalist sentiment. These Palestinians did not want Abdullah meddling in what they considered to be a struggle between them on one side, and the British and Zionists on the other. The *Mufti*, who was pushed by Palestinian nationalists, including his own

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<sup>16</sup> Joseph Nevo, *King Abdullah and Palestine*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Uriel Dann, *Studies in the History of Transjordan 1920-49*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1984, p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> Salibi, *A Modern History of Jordan*, p. 15.

prominent Jerusalem family, led a movement of resistance to British control that grew over time and directly conflicted with Abdullah's policy of cooperation. Abdullah continued his attempts to extend his rule into Palestine. He wanted to control the West Bank, while also giving the Zionists autonomy and civil rights. Haj Amin and others denounced Abdullah as a lackey of the British and the Zionists.

During the Second World War, Abdullah maintained his alliance with Great Britain, expecting that the British would ultimately win the war.<sup>19</sup> When pro-German Iraqi nationalists attempted to overthrow the Hashemite in Iraq, Abdullah sent a 350-man mechanized brigade as part of the British contingent to defeat the coup. The Arab Legion also fought alongside the British in Syria against the Vichy French government.<sup>20</sup>

After the war, as a result of an Anglo-Transjordanian treaty, Transjordan gained formal independence, though it still maintained a close relationship with Britain. On May 25, 1946, Abdullah assumed the title of King of the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan. Abdullah still wanted to rule a Greater Syrian Kingdom. But King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, who had expelled the Hashimites from the Hijaz, feared a stronger Hashemite dynasty, and opposed Abdullah's pan-Arabist ambitions.<sup>21</sup> Syrian nationalists, now in control after the French had left Syria, had no intention of welcoming another Hashimite into their country. Abdullah thus had to be content with Jordan for the time being.

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<sup>19</sup> There is some dispute on this from Uriel Dann, who claims that Abdullah may have attempted contact with Germany during the war to preserve his position if the Nazis were victorious. See Dann, *Studies in the History of Transjordan*, p. 117.

<sup>20</sup> Wilson, *The Making of Jordan*, p. 133.

<sup>21</sup> Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan*, p. 151.

The Zionist movement that had begun at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to form an independent Jewish state in Palestine began to gain momentum prior to the Second World War. This escalation was partly a reaction to Nazi oppression of Jews living in Germany. With the war over, the movement grew stronger, and Jewish groups formed that used terror tactics to drive the British out of Palestine. The British were exhausted, and had little stomach for more conflict. The Arabs were depending on British rule to keep the Jews from forming a state. King Abdullah was quick to see that his ambitions in Palestine could only be realized with British help. In the spring of 1948, the King left with his aides for England to meet with Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin. The Prime Minister of Jordan, Tawfiq Abul Huda, requested a meeting with Bevin, and General Glubb acted as an interpreter. Abul Huda was worried that after the British left Palestine, the Jews would move into the areas set aside for the Palestinian Arabs, who would be defenseless against them. Abul Huda wanted to move the Arab Legion in to protect them by occupying those areas, and wanted Britain's assent in the matter. Glubb, who was acting as an interpreter, translated Abul Huda's thoughts to Bevin, who answered, "*It seems the obvious thing to do...but do not go and invade the areas allotted to the Jews.*"<sup>22</sup> Abul Huda's request was an attempt to get the British to tacitly agree to Abdullah's designs on as much of Palestine as he could get.

The British withdrew from Palestine on May 14, 1948. The same day, the UN General Assembly approved a resolution for a UN mediator to resolve the conflict between the Jews and Arabs. The crisis came almost immediately. On May 15,

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<sup>22</sup> John Bageot Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1957, p. 66.

soldiers from Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria, along with the Jordanian Arab Legion, entered Palestine and began to fight against the Jewish *Haganah* (precursor to the Israeli Defense Force). After a brief UN mediated cease-fire in June, fighting continued, and resulted in a devastating defeat for the Arabs. By all accounts the Arabs were woefully disorganized and poorly equipped and trained. Only the Jordanians, who were still led by Glubb and his British officers, fared well, though they suffered from severe logistical shortages.<sup>23</sup> There was no coordination between the various Arab armies, and Arab commanders severely underestimated the fighting strength and ability of the Jewish Army.<sup>24</sup>

The War ended with an agreement signed between the Israelis and the individual Arab counties except Iraq, which refused any agreement. Jordan signed its own armistice with Israel on the island of Rhodes on April 3, 1949. As a result of the armistice, Jordan gained the West Bank of the Jordan River, including East Jerusalem, totaling some 6,000 square miles. The agreement also added 670,000 Palestinians to the 300,000 Jordanians already living in the kingdom.<sup>25</sup>

One important result of the war was the influx of refugees into Jordan. Thousands of Palestinian Arabs, fleeing the fighting, moved east into Jordan. Abdullah accepted the refugees, feeling that he could demonstrate his importance in Palestine to the rest of the Arab world and be seen as a rescuer.<sup>26</sup> In fact, the Palestinians refugees harbored a great deal of resentment for Abdullah as a result of

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 90-91.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 93.

<sup>25</sup> Nevo, *Jordan in the Middle East*, p. 63.

<sup>26</sup> Nevo, *King Abdullah and the Palestinians*, p. 149.

the war. Many saw him as a continuing lackey of the British who had perhaps even concluded a deal with the Jews during the war in order to gain the territory that had been their homes.

The Legion's failure to defend two Palestinian villages, Lydda and Ramle, from Zionist troops caused further resentment. Glubb had decided that Jerusalem must be defended, and to do this he had to pull troops out of the two villages, leaving them undefended. Many Palestinian civilians were killed as a result. Leaders of other Arab countries, who earlier had suspected Glubb of being controlled by the British or Zionists, now vilified him as a traitor. The Palestinians themselves felt that they had been abandoned, and blamed Glubb, Abdullah and the Arab Legion for the losses. Palestinian resentment of the Jordanian Hashimites began as a result of suspected Jordanian collusion with Zionists and the loss of life in the villages, and would continue as a source of tension for Jordanian kings during the next half century.

Abdullah continued to consolidate his power after the war. The Arab Legion, his main source of security, grew from 7,000 to 25,000 after the 1948-49 War.<sup>27</sup> But the Legion's increasing dependence on British aid worried many British officials who saw that both Arabs and Arab governments were beginning to resent Britain and Abdullah.<sup>28</sup>

In April 1950, the East and West Bank were officially unified. Abdullah emphasized common links between the two sides, and glossed over the desire of many Palestinians to have their own country. Many Palestinian refugees resented being

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<sup>27</sup> Kirkbride, *From the Wings*, p. 127.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p.128.



unified with Jordan, and wanted to return to their homes and establish their own country. Abdullah tried to build a support base within the Palestinian population by employing them in important positions in his government. Three statesmen who would play prominent roles in post-1949 Jordan were all Palestinians: Ibrahim Hashim, Samir al-Rifai, and Tawfiq Abul-Huda.<sup>29</sup>

Much of the Arab world denounced Abdullah as a traitor for annexing the West Bank and quashing the possibility of an independent Arab Palestine. An underground Palestinian movement plotted against him. On July 20, 1951, King Abdullah was assassinated as he left Friday prayers in Jerusalem at the al-Aqsa Mosque. Outraged members of the Arab Legion rampaged through the ancient city until Glubb and his officers could regain control.<sup>30</sup>

Talal, Abdullah's eldest son became king, but he had a history of mental instability, and his reign did not last long. On August 11, 1952, the Jordanian Parliament voted to depose Talal in favor of his seventeen year-old son Husayn. Talal did not object, and when he was presented with the deposition order, simply said, "*I had expected this. Please thank the government and the Parliament on my behalf. I pray God to bless and keep my country and my people.*"<sup>31</sup> Talal left for Egypt, where he lived for almost a year, and then moved to Turkey, where he lived in a mental hospital until his death until 1972.

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<sup>29</sup> Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, p. 40.

<sup>30</sup> Day, *East Bank West Bank*, p. 23.

<sup>31</sup> Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, p. 295.

## Chapter 2: Husayn ibn Talal

### Timeline

November 14, 1935-	Husayn ibn Talal born in Amman
July 20 1951-	Abdullah assassinated
August 11, 1952-	Talal deposed
May 2, 1953-	Husayn becomes king
March 1956-	Glubb Pasha dismissed
April 1957-	Abortive Zarqa Coup led by Ali Abu Nuwar
June 1967-	Six-Day War
September 1970-	Husayn moves against PLO in Jordan
	Nasser dies
October 1974-	Rabat Declaration: PLO accepted as sole Representatives of Palestinian people
September 1978-	Camp David Accords: Egyptian Israeli peace
December 1987-	<i>Intifada</i> begins in Gaza and West Bank
July 1988-	Husayn renounces claims to West Bank
August 1990-	Iraq invades Kuwait
February 1991-	Kuwait liberated
October 1991-	Madrid talks begin
September 1993-	Israeli/Palestinian peace treaty
October 1994-	Jordanian/Israeli peace treaty
November 1995-	Rabin assassinated
September 1998-	Wye Accords signed
Febrary 7, 1999-	Husayn dies

On no occasion have I felt that I was indispensable to Jordan. I am its servant, not its master. Invariably I have been at pains to build up a family feeling in Jordan so that I may be, if you like, the father of a large family just as much as the king of a small country.<sup>1</sup> (King Husayn)

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<sup>1</sup> Hussein ibn Talal. *Uneasy Lies the Head*, USA: Bernard Geis Associates, 1962, p. 247.

Many books have been written about King Husayn, and have analyzed his long reign. It is not the purpose of this chapter to describe his reign in detail. He ruled for 46 years and during that time, many events shaped his outlook and his style of leadership. He assumed the throne as a teenager, and learned quickly from the challenges that faced him. Husayn's early days and his accession to the throne shed some light on his later style of rule. The many attempts on his life and coup plots also reinforced his will to survive and honed his ability to outmaneuver his adversaries. Husayn's reign is a textbook example of a leader's ability to take a small, relatively weak desert kingdom and turn it in to a strategically important and influential regional power. Husayn's recasting of himself from a brave fighter in the struggle with Israel to a respected man of peace gives credence to the theory that he was ready to change his political course in order to maintain the support he needed to remain in power. This chapter will summarize his reign, and illustrate how certain events during his lifetime affected his rule.

Husayn was born in Amman on November 14, 1935, and though his father was the son of the king, he did not live a lavish lifestyle in his youth. In his biography, Husayn relates how his younger sister died of pneumonia because his family could not afford heating during the cold winters in Amman.<sup>2</sup> The veracity of this story is not as important as the fact that it established the king as a man of the people, who understood his subjects' problems. Husayn was attending Victoria College in Egypt in 1951, and was on vacation in Jordan when his grandfather was assassinated. He was at his grandfather's side during the event, and could have been killed himself had

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

not one of the medals on his uniform deflected the stray bullet. He watched his grandfather's advisors scatter in front of the assassin, "...*fleeing in every direction...*"<sup>3</sup> This event taught him a great deal about loyalty, and he wrote, "*That picture, far more distinct than the face of the assassin, has remained with me ever since as a constant reminder of the frailty of political devotion.*"<sup>4</sup> In his relations with political allies and foes in later years, the king was very careful never to rely too much on one man or one group in order to avoid allowing them too much power or being let down by less than total loyalty. He replaced his Prime Ministers many times during his reign, as testament to this belief.

Husayn left Victoria College for Harrow School in England. In August 1952, while on vacation in Switzerland, he was informed that the Jordanian Parliament had removed his father Talal from the throne and that he was to become king. Husayn was 17 at the time, too young to take the throne officially, and so Prime Minister Tawfiq Abul Huda and the cabinet took over control of the country until Husayn turned 18, the age in which he could officially become king. Husayn entered Sandhurst in September 1952, and spent a year that he thoroughly enjoyed, learning military science. He did very well, and gained the respect of his British peers and his instructors.<sup>5</sup> His experience at Sandhurst reinforced in him the value of military discipline and the importance of a strong and loyal military. These were lessons that would keep him in power for the next 46 years.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> James Lunt, *Hussein of Jordan: A Political Biography*, London: Macmillan, 1989 p. 17.

Husayn returned to Jordan a year later, and on May 2, 1953, he was crowned king. He began his reign by appointing Fawzi al-Mulqi Prime Minister. He had met al-Mulqi in Britain while he was at school and al-Mulqi was the ambassador in London. The relationship went well initially, but then several border disputes with Israelis caused both the Right and Left in Jordan to criticize al-Mulqi for being too weak. Husayn replaced him in 1954 with Tawfiq Abul Huda and showed his ability to exercise power over politicians much senior to him in age and experience.

Husayn's first real challenge came with in 1955 with the Baghdad Pact riots, which will be covered in detail in Chapter Three. It was then that he realized the importance of domestic popularity and the loyalty of the army. That the army was a vital pillar of his support was further reinforced in April 1957, when the newly appointed Army Chief of Staff, Ali Abu Nuwar, attempted to lead a military coup against the young king. Presidents Nasser of Egypt and Quwatly of Syria ostensibly supported the coup. In a famous story that has taken on mythic proportions in its retelling, Husayn took Abu Nuwar to Zarqa, the town northeast of Amman where most of the troops were stationed, and confronted the restive soldiers. His presence turned their mutinous feelings into declarations of unswerving loyalty. By force of personality, Husayn broke up the coup and in a show of mercy, banished Abu Nuwar to Egypt instead of executing him. Abu Nuwar returned several years later and became a successful businessman.<sup>6</sup>

Husayn's next crisis occurred not in Jordan, but in the neighboring Kingdom of Iraq. King Faisal of Iraq was Husayn's cousin, and they had both attended Harrow

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<sup>6</sup> Lunt, *Hussein of Jordan*, p. 42.

together. On February 14, 1958, both countries joined in an agreement to form an Arab union. The union was an attempt by both governments to strengthen their positions against the union formed by Egypt and Syria two weeks earlier, called the United Arab Republic (UAR). But only five months later, a bloody coup in Iraq overthrew the king and ended the union. Nationalists led by Colonels Abdul Karim Qasim and Abdul Salam Arif killed the royal family and the long serving Prime Minister, Nuri al-Said. Husayn, fearing that he might meet the same fate, requested help from Great Britain and America to stabilize his rule. The British deployed two airborne battalions to Jordan, and were forced to use Israeli airspace to get to Jordan, being denied overflight privileges in the surrounding Arab countries.<sup>7</sup> The Americans deployed troops on a similar operation to support President Chamoun in Lebanon. Despite distancing himself from Britain at times in order to gain popular support (as will be seen in Chapter Three) Husayn was not hesitant to ask the western powers for help when he needed it. Husayn himself said of the request that he asked for the troops "*as proof that a small, free nation in times of trouble did not have to stand alone.*"<sup>8</sup>

Husayn's request for western help succeeded in stabilizing his monarchy, but he continued to face challenges and threats to his life. On November 11, 1958, he was flying a small plane to Switzerland to meet his mother when Syrian fighters tried to force Husayn down over Syrian Airspace. He narrowly escaped them. The attack

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 52.

<sup>8</sup> Hussein, *Uneasy Lies the Head*, p. 205.

outraged Jordanian citizens and Husayn's popularity rose. The event also enhanced his reputation for physical courage and mystique as a survivor.

In early 1959, Husayn uncovered a coup plot led by his Army Chief of Staff, Sadiq Shara'a. The king waited until the following May, when the general was accompanying him on a trip to the United States, to arrest the other coup plotters. He arrested Shara'a upon their return to Jordan, and the general was given the death sentence. But in another show of mercy to political enemies, Husayn commuted the sentence to life, and then pardoned Shara'a in 1971.<sup>9</sup> On 29 August 1960, Prime Minister Hazza al-Majali was killed when a bomb exploded in his office in Amman. Just after the explosion, Jordanian Intelligence discovered an unrelated UAR-inspired plot to overthrow the king.

The series of coup plots ended, but threats to Husayn's life did not. In a chain of events that seemed like they had been taken out of a murder mystery, Husayn's aides discovered poisoned nose drops in his medicine chest, and dead cats in the palace garden, killed by poisoned food meant for the king.<sup>10</sup>

In 1964, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed in Cairo. This organization, based on the principle that the Palestinians who lost their lands in 1948, had to have representation beyond the existing Arab states, became a major thorn in Husayn's side. He disliked the notion that anyone but him could represent the Palestinians who were living in Jordan. The leader of the PLO by 1969, Yasir

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<sup>9</sup> Lunt, *Hussein of Jordan*, p. 61.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 64.

Arafat, became Husayn's nemesis. Chapter Four will examine in detail the events that lead to a showdown between the two men in 1970.

The next major crisis of Husayn's reign was the 1967 War, in which Jordan lost its territory on the West Bank of the Jordan River. This crisis will also be covered in Chapter Four. It is not inaccurate to state that President Nasser of Egypt started the war by closing the Straits of Tiran and provoking the Israeli attack. But many other Arab leaders criticized Nasser for depending too much on the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) deployed in the Sinai after 1956 to maintain peace between Egypt and Israel. Jordanian radio broadcasts taunted Nasser for being weak in the face of Israel, and certainly led to the actions he took that began the war.<sup>11</sup> Husayn lost a great deal in the war but also bears some of the responsibility for starting it.

In 1973 Egypt and Syria attacked Israel in a coordinated operation that stunned western analysts who thought Arab armies incapable of such operations. Jordan's participation was minimal. Only one Jordanian armored brigade saw action in Syria. Husayn was not interested in losing more territory to the Israelis. Despite initial losses, the Israelis recovered and successfully counterattacked.

Jordan was one of the "confrontation states" on the front line of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Husayn maintained much of his credibility in the Arab World by publicly remaining staunchly opposed to a negotiated peace with Israel, even as he was secretly communicating with the Israelis. Though Palestinian leaders could accuse him before 1988 of using his claim on the West Bank to further his own

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<sup>11</sup> Roland Dallas, *King Hussein: A Life on the Edge*, New York: Fromm International Publishing, 1999, p. 110. See also Lunt, *Hussein of Jordan*, p. 84.



territorial gains, Jordan had fought with Egypt against Israel in 1967, and paid dearly for its efforts. Husayn denounced Egypt's President Anwar Sadat's involvement in the 1979 Camp David Accords, and joined the rest of the world in alienating Egypt for signing a peace treaty with Israel. The accords did nothing for the plight of the Palestinians or the status of Jerusalem, the third holiest city to Islam. By opposing the treaty, Husayn could maintain his status as a leader of the confrontation with Israel.

Despite losing the West Bank in 1967, Jordan remained involved with the administration of the area and continued to claim the West Bank as part of Jordan. Jordan's government paid the wages of 24,000 civil servants in Gaza and the West Bank, and also funded construction projects.<sup>12</sup> Jordan's claims on the West Bank, both during the reign of Abdullah and Husayn, brought Jordan into conflict with Palestinian nationalists who felt that the Hashimites of Jordan were trying to extend their territory and influence and were not concerned with Palestinian aspirations for an independent nation.

In December 1987 a popular Palestinian uprising began in Gaza and the West Bank against Israeli rule. The uprising began independently of the PLO leadership who were in exile in Tunis at the time. The PLO scrambled to take control of the *Intifada*, as it was known, and the movement caused a great deal of trouble for the Israelis. A year after the movement began, Husayn renounced his claim to the West Bank in an official statement on July 31, 1988. He may have been concerned that the uprising could spread to Jordan. In this major change of Hashimite policy, he acknowledged the 1974 Rabat decision that the PLO was the sole representative of the

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<sup>12</sup> Dallas, *King Hussein: A Life on the Edge*, p. 206. The figures are for 1988.

Palestinian people and said, "*It is also viewed that these (Jordanian-West Bank) links hamper the Palestinian struggle to gain international support for the Palestinian cause...*"<sup>13</sup> But in the same speech, Husayn was careful to put distance between the Palestinians who lived on the West Bank and those of Palestinian origin who lived in Jordan. He did not want to renounce his authority over people he considered part of his own kingdom. By renouncing his claim when he did, Husayn retained the initiative and did not give credence to the Palestinians who claimed he merely wanted to keep the West Bank for his own territorial ambitions. He was ready to change his policies in order to maintain Hashimite rule in Jordan.

Husayn's actions in the 1991 Gulf War will be covered in detail in Chapter Five. He supported Saddam Husayn and as a result lost a great deal of international support. He desperately needed to get back into the good graces of his main benefactor, the United States. Yasir Arafat, the leader of the PLO, had also backed Iraq. He outraged the Arab Gulf States, his main source of monetary support. Arafat decided the time for peace with Israel had come. Husayn, seeing that Arafat was ready, decided that backing the peace process was his best way to demonstrate to the US that Jordan was a moderate Arab state and a valuable ally.

Husayn supported the 1993 Israeli-PLO accord, and was present at the signing ceremony on the White House Lawn in September. In October 1994, Husayn signed his own peace accord with Israel. By agreeing to peace, Husayn regained his reputation as a moderate Arab leader.

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<sup>13</sup> Bickerton and Klausner, *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p. 242.

His moving eulogy at the funeral of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin cemented his reputation as the most formidable force for peace in the Middle East. Following the assassination and Labor's loss at the polls, Likud Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's disagreements with Arafat had stalled the process. The Clinton administration tried to jump-start the process with the Wye Accords in October 1998. At the time, Husayn was dying of non-Hodgkins Lymphoma and was weak from chemotherapy. But he interrupted his treatment at the Mayo clinic in Minnesota in order to travel to Washington to play a part in the negotiations. His gaunt appearance on television further fueled his image of a man who worked for peace. The king had come a long way after being denounced by American politicians for backing Saddam Husayn's invasion of Kuwait.

When he died on February 7, 1999, Husayn was eulogized by almost every world leader as a great force for peace in the Middle East. Heads of State came from all over the globe to pay tribute to him. The fact that Hafaz al-Asad and Binyamin Netanyahu both attended his funeral was not lost on journalists who portrayed his funeral as a chance to bring feuding states together and further the cause for peace. Husayn had gone from warrior king to man of peace. But he had not followed a long-term plan. He used common sense and the ability to do what he needed to in order to stay in power, given the limited options he had. He knew how to form alliances and maintain his own delicate domestic balance of support. The next chapters will outline three instances in which this thesis applies.

## Chapter Three

### First Challenges: The Baghdad Pact and the Dismissal of Glubb Pasha

#### Timeline

July 1952-	Free Officer's coup in Egypt
May 1953-	Husayn becomes king of Jordan
May 1954-	Tawfiq Abul Huda becomes Prime Minister
February 24, 1955-	Baghdad Pact signed
May 1955-	Abul Huda dismissed, Said al-Mufti replaces him
September 1955-	"Czech" Arms Deal with Egypt
December 7-14, 1955-	General Templer visits Jordan
December 13, 1955-	al-Mufti dismissed, Hazza al-Majali replaces him
December 17, 1955-	Rioting begins
December 19, 1955-	al-Majali replaced, Ibrahim Hashim becomes PM
January 8, 1956-	Hashim dismissed, Samir al-Rifai becomes PM
March 1, 1956-	General Glubb dismissed

This chapter will outline the origins of the Baghdad Pact and Husayn's attempt to enter into it in the face of growing Arab nationalism within Jordan. It will then cover Husayn's attempts to placate the Arab nationalists in his country by firing Lieutenant General John Bageot Glubb (Glubb Pasha), the former British Army officer in command of the Arab Legion. Husayn's Army was the most important element of his power base in Jordan. His actions during this period indicate that he initially made some decisions without enough long-term analysis. But in the end, he understood his power base, and what he had to do to maintain it.

#### **The Baghdad Pact Crisis**

"For an alliance to be effective, it must reflect some sense of common purpose, a perception of common danger, and the capacity to pool strengths. None of these elements applied to the Baghdad Pact."<sup>1</sup> (Henry Kissinger)

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Kissinger. *Diplomacy*, New York: Simon and Shuster, 1994, p. 527.

Now all hell broke loose. Riots such as we had never seen before, led by Communists again, disrupted the entire country. This time bands of arsonists started burning government offices, private houses, foreign properties. I had no alternative but to call out the Legion, who with tear gas and determination met force with force.<sup>2</sup> (King Husayn)

Husayn did not have to wait long for the first challenge to his leadership. The Baghdad Pact crisis, like so many others in the Third World during that period, emanated from the confrontation between the superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, who were trying to establish supremacy in the post-World War Two era. Under the Truman Administration, the United States adopted the policy of Containment, an attempt to stop all Soviet expansion. The Truman Doctrine called for the US to defend free countries against Soviet subjugation. Both superpowers vied for international influence. Middle Eastern oil was a rich prize, and the rivalry there was fierce.

This period also saw a change in old-style European colonial dominance of the Middle East. The Arab nationalist movement won a victory in 1952, when a group of Egyptian Officers known as the "Free Officers," who were dismayed with the humiliation of the 1948 defeat of the Arabs by Israel, overthrew Egyptian King Faruq. They considered Faruq to be corrupt, and believed that Britain and France were perpetuating colonial-style rule to the cost of Arab freedom and advancement. These nationalists considered Israel, not the Soviets, as their main threat. Iraq was a kingdom but led in reality by its powerful Prime Minister, Nuri al-Said, who had

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<sup>2</sup> Hussein, *Uneasy Lies the Head*, p. 112. In fact, communists had little to do with instigating the riots.

fought with the British against the Ottomans during the Arab Revolt in World War One. He was staunchly pro-West and ensured that Iraq was lined up against the threat of Soviet expansionism. King Husayn was also an ally of Britain, but had to balance his ties with the Iraqis and the Arab nationalists in Egypt.

Following the Second World War, Great Britain, in an attempt to maintain her influence in the Middle East and control the Suez Canal, put forward several initiatives for collective security in the region under British leadership and United States support. Only the last initiative, known as the Baghdad Pact, came to fruition. This plan called for the protection of the "Northern Tier" of the Middle East, from Soviet domination. The benefit for the Middle Eastern countries that joined the alliance was the arms sales agreements intended to bolster their countries against the Soviet threat.

Nasser, a powerful member of the Free Officer's movement, became the leader of Egypt in 1954. He saw that the Baghdad Pact to be an attempt by Britain to perpetuate the imperial control, and so refused to join. Nasser believed Egypt was the dominant state in the Arab world, and felt that it should control all alliances. He was worried that Iraq, a British ally and his main rival in the region, would become too powerful. Nasser also felt that the pact would stand in the way of his forming a neutralist alliance of Arab States who would not be in either the Soviet or US camp.<sup>3</sup> The state-run Egyptian media began anti-Baghdad Pact propaganda, aimed at

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<sup>3</sup> Miles Copland, *The Game of Nations*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969, p. 128.

discouraging Iraq from joining. But on February 24, 1955, Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan and Britain signed the Baghdad Pact.

The Baghdad Pact suffered from a fatal flaw. The leadership in the US and Britain saw the Soviet Union as the main threat to the region. But most of the Arab members of the pact believed that the Soviet Union was not their main enemy. Iraq and the other Arab states saw Israel as their main threat, and Pakistan saw India as its main enemy. Only Turkey felt genuinely threatened by Soviet expansionism. The united front against the communist threat was in reality an excuse for these countries to get weapons in order to face the countries they really perceived as enemies.

Another weakness in the pact's collective security plan was the lack of political cohesion within the Arab world. King Husayn of Jordan decried the rivalry that had grown among the various Arab states, despite the Arab nationalist rhetoric. He said that

Saudi Arabia had designs on the Jordanian port of Aqaba, and that Nasser's Egypt was beginning to control Syria. In his memoirs, Husayn accused the various states of *"...squabbling, maneuvering for position, just as they had done in the past whenever the Ottoman Empire showed signs of breaking up."*<sup>4</sup> But Britain pressed for the alliance to continue, and began to try to persuade Jordan to join as well.

Despite growing Arab nationalist and anti-British sentiment in Jordan, Husayn leaned towards joining the pact. He saw Jordan's entry into the alliance as a way of supplying his army with materiel and obtaining aircraft for his fledgling air force. In March 1955, Turkey gave Jordan several training aircraft to persuade them to join. In

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<sup>4</sup> Hussein ibn Talal, *Uneasy Lies the Head*, p. 104.

May, Husayn appointed Said al-Mufti Prime Minister of Jordan. al-Mufti was a Circassian, a minority ethnic group in Jordan. He was favorable to supporting the pact, and had strong Iraqi ties.<sup>5</sup> al-Mufti's cabinet was strongly represented by East-Bankers, and did not give the position of Foreign Minister to a Palestinian, as was customary.<sup>6</sup> Because of their perception that the West was partly responsible for the creation of Israel, the Palestinians were less likely to be in favor of the Baghdad Pact. Husayn's choice of al-Mufti, and the lack of a Palestinian in the position of Foreign Minister is evidence that Husayn seemed to be warming to the idea of joining the pact.

In September 1955, the political landscape in the Middle East changed drastically. Nasser entered into an agreement known as the "Czech Arms Deal." Though Nasser signed the agreement with Czechoslovakia, this was in reality a treaty with the Soviet Union to purchase weapons. The Soviets had now successfully "leapfrogged containment" over the northern tier of Turkey and into the heart of the Middle East.<sup>7</sup> After the arms agreement, pro-Nasser sentiment in Jordan grew. Arab nationalists in Jordan saw Nasser's decision to ally with the Soviet Union as a defeat for British colonialism. Husayn realized that many of his subjects perceived the Czech arms agreement as a victory for Arabs, not Communism. He wrote, "*Nasser was the first Arab statesman really to throw off the shackles of the West.*"<sup>8</sup> Husayn and al-Mufti temporarily wavered in their pro-Baghdad Pact stance. al-Mufti sent a cable to Nasser congratulating him on the Czech arms deal. On November 30, Nasser

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<sup>5</sup> Robert B. Satloff, *From Abdullah to Hussein*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 108.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 108-109.

<sup>7</sup> Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 522.

<sup>8</sup> Hussein, *Uneasy Lies the Head*, p. 107.



sent his Minister of War to Amman to take advantage of the anti-British public opinion. The Jordanian government formally welcomed him. But Husayn had not given up on British help. On the very same day, Britain delivered the first of ten Vampire fighter jets to a military airfield in Mafraq, west of Amman, as an attempt to get Jordan to ally with the pact countries.<sup>9</sup>

During the previous months, Britain had tried to persuade Jordan to join the pact, despite the fact that U.S. policy was to avoid active recruitment of new countries into the agreement. Secretary of State Dulles was especially wary of getting Jordan involved. He said that the U.S. would not favor Jordan joining the pact because of U.S.-Israeli ties.<sup>10</sup> The British government knew that Jordan was in a precarious position, situated between Egypt and Iraq, and still threatened by Israel. Dragging Jordan into the confrontation with Nasser would put Husayn in a difficult position.<sup>11</sup> But Husayn, ever interested in building up his military, still showed interest in joining the pact. On November 22, 1955, British Foreign Secretary Harold Macmillan traveled to Baghdad for a meeting of pact member states. All the members felt that Britain should persuade Jordan to join the pact, and felt that the best way to persuade Jordan was through the promise of further military aid.<sup>12</sup>

Early in December, General Sir Gerald Templer, the British Chief of General Staff, visited Jordan to shore up support for the pact. His visit was not publicized as an attempt to convince Husayn to join the pact. His official mission was to renegotiate

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<sup>9</sup> Satloff, *From Abdullah to Hussein* p. 117.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 114.

<sup>11</sup> Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, p. 393.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 116.

the Anglo-Jordanian Agreement, variations of which had existed since 1923. The first agreement in 1923 recognized the autonomy of the Amirate of Transjordan and delineated the special relationship between it and Great Britain. Subsequent revisions of the treaty provided military aid, established the Transjordanian political system and allowed Amir Abdullah more autonomy in expanding his army.<sup>13</sup> Templer now attempted to further renegotiate the treaty to give more military aid, drawing Jordan closer to Britain and paving the way for Jordan's accession into the Baghdad Pact. Husayn agreed, with the stipulation that one condition of the treaty would be more Arab officers in the Legion. Hussein knew that his power lay in his army, and he wanted to strengthen it, and give its Arab officers more power.

With promises of more aid, Templer convinced Husayn and most of his cabinet to join the alliance. The British offer to Jordan included funding for one additional infantry brigade (in addition to the three already in service), one additional tank regiment (in addition to the one in service), and a medium artillery regiment. The total military subsidy would increase from 10,000,000 pounds per year to 16,500,000 pounds the first year and 12,500,000 for each additional year.<sup>14</sup>

But Husayn still had concerns. He believed that Jordan, surrounded as it was by enemies and potential enemies, needed to become militarily self-sufficient. While he believed that joining the pact would strengthen his rule in the fractious kingdom, he felt that the alliance could only work if the majority of Arab states belonged. He wrote that no state should enter into an alliance without prior approval of its regional

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<sup>13</sup> P. J. Vatikiotis, *Politics and the Military in Jordan*. New York: Praeger, 1967, p. 48.

<sup>14</sup> Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, p. 393.

allies.<sup>15</sup> Husayn needed Nasser, the popular leader of Egypt champion of Arab Nationalism, to support Jordan's entry into the pact. Prior to signing the treaty, Husayn sent word to Nasser informing him of his intentions, and asked for Nasser's assent. He outlined his concerns to Nasser, including the continuing threat from Israel, and the fact that Jordan and Iraq were closely tied in geography, economics and history, and stating that joining the pact made sense in those terms. According to Husayn, Nasser wrote back, "*Any strength for Jordan is a strength for the Arab world. Therefore I can see no objection.*"<sup>16</sup>

With that understood blessing, Husayn decided to formally join. But he had misread the manipulative Egyptian leader. When word broke that the treaty with Britain had been signed, the Egyptian press denounced the Jordanian king as a lackey of the West. Public opinion in Jordan grew against the Pact and in favor of Nasser. Demonstrations against the Pact began in the streets of the Amman.

Perhaps Husayn lay too much of the blame at Nasser's feet for the alleged infamous "double-cross." With hindsight, it seems obvious that Husayn should have known Nasser would not support an arms deal that raised British influence in the Middle East. According to Egyptian newspaperman and Nasser confidant, Mohammed Hasanayn Haykal, Nasser was completely surprised when word came to him that Jordan would join the pact. He believed he had secured from British Prime Minister Anthony Eden a moratorium on any other Arab countries joining the pact.<sup>17</sup> Nasser never would have approved Jordan's accession to the Baghdad Pact, as Husayn

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<sup>15</sup> Hussein, *Uneasy Lies the Head*, p. 102.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* p. 110.

<sup>17</sup> Mohammed Hasanayn Haykal, *The Cairo Documents*, Garden City NY:Doubleday &Co, 1973, p. 79.

claims in his memoir. Husayn also underestimated the effect that the Egyptian media, particularly the popular Egyptian radio station, *Sawt al-Arab*, would have on his own people. But the king soon learned that it could affect his ministers also.

On December 13, four Palestinian members of Hussein's cabinet resigned to protest Jordan's joining the pact. The result was the end of the al-Mufti government. Egyptian subversion may have played a part in the resignations. Anwar al-Sadat, then serving as minister without portfolio, purportedly bribed three of the ministers to resign.<sup>18</sup> Husayn quickly dissolved the cabinet and appointed Hazza al-Majali, a pro-West politician as Prime Minister, and tried to maintain order. But on December 16, anti-pact riots flared in Jordanian cities, including the capital. Nasser's agents in Jordan may have initiated many of the anti-Pact riots from Palestinian refugee camps.<sup>19</sup>

Though he is not mentioned by name in Husayn's account of the crisis, Glubb was responsible for quelling the riots. The Jordanian people also blamed him for the deaths that resulted. The Egyptian press vilified Glubb. Haykal, in his account of the incident, wrote that Glubb gave his troops orders to open fire on the demonstrators and that the officers and men of the Legion refused to carry the orders out.<sup>20</sup> Other accounts of the incident indicate the Legion soldiers did in fact follow orders. Haykal's narrative illustrates the efforts of the Egyptian propaganda machine to use Glubb as a scapegoat. In order to placate the rioters, Husayn ordered al-Majali to resign on

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<sup>18</sup> Satloff, *From Abdullah to Hussein*, p. 123.

<sup>19</sup> Lunt, *Hussein of Jordan*, p. 23.

<sup>20</sup> Mohammed Hasanayn Haykal, *Malaffat al-Suways (The Suez Documents)*, Cairo: Al-Ahram Publishing, 1988, p. 385.

December 19, and installed an interim government until new elections could be called. Husayn thus abandoned his attempt to join the Baghdad Pact. Templer left Jordan on December 14 with no agreement, though Anthony Eden writes that Templer left believing Jordan would ultimately join the pact.<sup>21</sup> The new Prime Minister, Ibrahim Hashim, sought a coalition government that would placate the anti-monarchy nationalists, and declared a policy of "no new pacts."<sup>22</sup>

But the crisis did not end. After Hashim took office, several deputies filed a formal protest declaring that the dissolution of Parliament after the resignation of the four Palestinian ministers was illegal because the Minister of Interior had not approved it. Hussein's anti-monarchy opponents felt that the dissolution was merely an attempt to avoid new elections. Husayn resisted, crowds began to protest and soon a new wave of rioting broke out. Mobs in Amman attacked various government buildings including the Department of Agriculture and the Veterinary Department. The Philadelphia Hotel, a popular spot for foreign visitors, was also attacked. These demonstrations were "*the bloodiest in the Kingdom's history.*"<sup>23</sup> Discredited by the crisis, Hashim resigned. The newly appointed Prime Minister, Samir al-Rifai, continued the "no new pacts" refrain.

Saudi Arabia, claiming to fear the spreading anarchy, massed troops on the Saudi-Jordanian border. King Sa'ud had initially had designs on the port at Aqaba, and perhaps thought he might be able to take it in the confusion. But with the riots

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<sup>21</sup> Anthony Eden, *Full Circle: The Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. Sir Anthony Eden*, London, Cassel, 1960, p. 383.

<sup>22</sup> Satloff, *From Abdullah to Hussein*, p. 127.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.* p. 129.

spreading out of control, Sa'ud realized that the collapse of the Hashimite Kingdom in Jordan could further destabilize the region and threaten his own rule, and pulled back his troops. Once again, the Arab Legion put a stop to the riots. Only deft maneuvering by Rifai and Husayn and action by Glubb's disciplined legionnaires, restored order within Jordan.

The crisis was over and Husayn ended all efforts to join the Baghdad Pact. He had initially favored joining because he felt he could gain more military aid, and believed he could overcome the risk of inflaming anti-western sentiment in his kingdom. He soon realized that he was very wrong, and that Nasser and Sa'ud, would be prepared to capitalize on the unrest in Jordan. In his attempt to join the pact, Husayn displayed his grandfather's tendency to attempt to get all he could, and then adjust his ambitions when he realized he could not achieve exactly what he wanted. He wanted to get military aid, but did not realize that he had not lined up the proper support to win over the population.

Husayn did not ensure that his Prime Minister had formed a government that would support the pact.<sup>24</sup> The king had just turned twenty, and was learning his job as he went. One could expect some mistakes. Here he made serious ones, but also had the presence of mind to learn from them.

Hussein learned several lessons as a result of the crisis. He learned the importance of careful preparation, reliable intelligence, and unswerving loyalty. He also learned that it is risky to pursue policies *"wildly out of touch with the public*

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 124.

mood.”<sup>25</sup> This lesson would stay with him when he had to go against the West during the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Just as important, Hussein learned that the most vital pillar of support for his throne was the Jordanian Army.<sup>26</sup> It was this lesson that led Hussein to the next major decision of his monarchy.

### **The Dismissal of Glubb Pasha**

I told the King that I was his servant, and not that of the British Government, and that if he wished it, I would resign. But it is difficult for a man past middle-age to enjoy the full confidence of a young man of twenty. He has other advisors nearer his own age.<sup>27</sup> (General Glubb)

Glubb is the one who imposes fines on you...Glubb must go...It is a question of your freedom and your unity...the matter is left to you entirely, the Arabs of Jordan, the officers and soldiers of Jordan, and the authorities of Jordan.<sup>28</sup> (Egyptian News editorial)

The Baghdad Pact crisis was over, and Husayn was still the king of Jordan. But he knew that public sentiment was not with him and he had to gain the trust of his people, especially the Arab nationalists and the Palestinians. At this point, Hussein decided that the way to reestablish his support lay with reforming the Army.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 126.

<sup>26</sup> Vatikiotis, *Politics and the Military in Jordan*, p. 124.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Young, *Bedouin Command*, London: William Kimber, 1956, p. 8. General Glubb's foreword.

<sup>28</sup> Royle, *Glubb Pasha*, p. 440 (excerpt from Egyptian newspaper editorial).

The Army, his main pillar of support, was changing. It was becoming more nationalist, and more political. Prior to the first war with Israel, the army was small and did not face any large threats. But in 1949, Jordan suddenly had to defend a 400-mile border with Israel. The British wanted to help their allies, but were still exhausted from the Second World War, and could not afford to send troops to the region. Thus the Arab Legion had to grow. Initially, the Legion had only a few British officers, and Glubb, who had been in command since 1939, wanted it that way. He understood that if the population saw the Legion as being controlled by Britain, its reputation would be damaged. He also wanted it to remain small in order to maintain its high standards.<sup>29</sup> But as it grew to meet its new responsibilities after the 1948 War, Glubb believed that the Legion required more British supervision. At the beginning of 1948, there were 6,000 men in the Arab Legion. By 1956 this number had grown to 25,000 men.<sup>30</sup> The number of officers (both Arab and British) also went up from 300 in 1948 to 1,500 in 1956.<sup>31</sup> Though by 1955 there were only about 100 British officers in the legion, they held 50% of the command positions.<sup>32</sup> Some Jordanian officers in the legion saw that their command opportunities were not growing with the young Army and they began to resent British control. This was the beginning of anti-British feeling within the military.

Training within the legion also became more technical, and required the recruitment of more educated officers. The increase in education led to more

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<sup>29</sup> James Lunt, *Hussein of Jordan*, London: Macmillan, 1989, p. 13.

<sup>30</sup> Ali Syed El-Erdoos, *The Hashemite Arab Army*, Amman: The Publishing Committee, 1980, p.310.

<sup>31</sup> Murad Abbas, *Al Daur al-Siyasi lil-Jaysh al Urduni 1921-1973 (The Political Role of the Jordanian Army)*, Beirut: PLO Research Dept. 1973, p. 73.

<sup>32</sup> Lunt, *Hussein of Jordan*, p. 13.



sophisticated thinking, and politicization. Officers were now studying English, and were no longer dominated by the "old sweats" of the Bedouin Desert British Patrols, upon whom the British had depended to provide the loyalty base in the Army. "Whether Glubb Pasha liked it or not, the Arab officers in the Arab Legion could no longer be expected to stay out of politics."<sup>33</sup> Many of the officers who were most political came from the specialties that required the most training, for example, engineers, artillery, and administration.

Glubb resisted the calls for Arabization of the officer corps. He felt that ultimately Arabs would be in charge, but the training level was not yet at that point. In one case, Glubb's reform plan called for an English officer to command the Legion's engineer unit until as late as 1985.<sup>34</sup> There is evidence that the British were aware that Glubb was moving too slowly in Arabizing the Legion. When Templer came to Jordan for the Baghdad Pact discussions, he told Glubb in a private meeting that in order to placate the nationalist critics of the Legion, unit commands should be given to Arab officers where possible. He also suggested that Arabs command brigade size elements and that British colonels serve as second-in-command.<sup>35</sup> But Glubb refused to promote officers simply because they were Arabs.

Glubb felt that he had the complete support of the officers and soldiers in the Legion. He believed that the army was not involved in politics and was utterly pro-monarchy and pro-western. But he understood that there was frustration in the officer corps regarding command positions for Arab officers. In a letter to Templer just after

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<sup>33</sup> James Lunt. *Glubb Pasha*, London: Harvill Press, 1984, p. 166.

<sup>34</sup> Hussein, *Uneasy Lies the Head*, p. 132.

<sup>35</sup> Royle, *Glubb Pasha*, p. 429.

the Baghdad Pact riots, he raised the idea of limiting British officers to training positions only. But he then disregarded his own suggestion in the next sentence: *"Militarily, however, this is extremely awkward because the Arab officers have not had time to grow up enough. There is also always the danger that they may fall among themselves when the plums of higher appointments have to be divided."*<sup>36</sup>

In the 1954 elections, Prime Minister Tawfiq Abul Huda had persuaded Glubb that his soldiers should vote only for the government candidates. Prior to this, soldiers did not vote, as Glubb wanted to keep them out of politics. But Husayn approved the idea, and Glubb assented. When word broke out that the Legion had "fixed" an election, a riot ensued, and Legion soldiers put it down, killing ten people.<sup>37</sup> In retrospect, Glubb admitted that here the Legion had been dragged into politics. This was the first time Legion soldiers had opened fire on Jordanians, and years after the event, Glubb wrote that this was a turning point.<sup>38</sup>

A "Free Officers" movement had begun in Jordan, modeled after the one in Egypt that overthrew King Faruq. Glubb mentioned the organization only once in his memoirs, stating that it was started by a transportation officer from the legion who was dismissed for "financial dishonesty."<sup>39</sup> He said that the organization had distributed anti-monarchy pamphlets that were actually printed in Cairo, not in Jordan. He maintained that only six Jordanian officers conspired against the king.<sup>40</sup> Peter Young, who commanded an infantry battalion of the Legion and was presumably more in

<sup>36</sup> Uriel Dann, "Glubb and the Politicization of the Arab Legion" *Asian and African Studies* no. 21, 1987 p. 214-215.

<sup>37</sup> Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, p. 355.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 356.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 412.

<sup>40</sup> Glubb, *The Changing Scenes of Life*, p. 180.

touch with the troops than Glubb, disagreed. He traced the "Young Officer's Movement" to the summer of 1954, and credited it with stronger, though not overwhelming, support.<sup>41</sup>

As a result of the Israeli raid on Qibya, where Israeli commandos killed 66 Jordanians in October 1953, many Jordanians felt that Glubb was not doing enough to resist perceived Israeli aggression, and the British were not true friends of Jordan. In fact, Glubb was greatly distressed by the events at Qibya, and set up an inquiry into the matter, resulting in the dismissal of a British brigade commander.<sup>42</sup> But the Egyptian press, as it had done during the Baghdad Pact crisis, attacked Glubb as a symbol of colonial domination. In some editorials he was referred to as "Kalb Pasha."<sup>43</sup> His Bedouin soldiers remained loyal, but his popularity among the average Jordanian was diminishing. He was forced to begin traveling with a bodyguard.

Despite his vilification in the Egyptian press, Glubb continued with Husayn's support. But just after the Baghdad Pact riots, when Glubb briefed the young king on a revised defense plan of Jordan against Israeli attack, Husayn's support noticeably cooled. The main thrust of the plan was to base 50% of the army in Zarqa, 34 miles from the Israeli border. The other 50% would be deployed in outposts across the Jordan River on the border with Israel. Glubb had learned from the Lydda and Ramle debacles in 1948 that he must be able to reinforce a threatened area quickly to aid the local National Guard troops.

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<sup>41</sup> Young, *Bedouin Command*, p. 174.

<sup>42</sup> Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, p. 309.

<sup>43</sup> Royle, *Glubb Pasha*, p. 424. *Kalb* is Arabic for "dog" and a severe insult in Arab culture.

Analyses of the plan differ as to how effective it would have been against the mobile warfare the Israelis excelled at. One criticism is that Glubb was planning only for defense against a full frontal attack by the Israeli army.<sup>44</sup> A different analysis of the plan states that it was sound, but that it was not politically defensible because it did not call for the defense of the entire 400-mile border, and accepted that the Israelis would take Jordanian ground initially.<sup>45</sup>

After Glubb completed his briefing and sat down, the King stood and said he did not agree with the plan and criticized Glubb in front of his ministers and Arab Legion officers. His main criticism was that the plan specifically called for giving ground to Israel in order to defend vital areas. According to several accounts, Husayn said, *"I will never surrender one hairs-breadth of my country. The Army will defend the demarcation line. Then we shall attack."* He then said, *"We are grateful to the Chief of the General Staff for all the work he has done, but I think now it is time for him to enjoy a rest."*<sup>46</sup> Husayn did not fire Glubb that day, and in fact, told him afterwards that he needn't worry about the comments in the meeting. The plan was later revised and approved. But Glubb had his first indication that he did not enjoy the King's full support.

On March 1, 1956, Glubb's fears were borne out. With no prior notice, King Husayn instructed his Prime Minister to dismiss Glubb. Despite strong protests from the British Ambassador, Charles Duke, and from Whitehall itself, Husayn refused to change his mind. Glubb, who had been the commander of the Arab Legion since

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<sup>44</sup> Erdoos, *The Hashemite Arab Army*, p. 314.

<sup>45</sup> Vatikiotis, *Politics and the Military in Jordan*, p. 116.

<sup>46</sup> Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, p. 366.

1939, was initially given two hours to leave the county. When he protested, Husayn extended the deadline. But at seven o'clock the next morning, he was on a plane to Cyprus with his wife and children. Within weeks, Husayn also dismissed two other top British officers, Glubb's second in command and the military intelligence chief.

Was Husayn only concerned with Glubb's ability to defend Jordan against Israel? The king later wrote that his main reason for dismissing Glubb was disagreement on two issues: the limit on Arab officers in the Legion, and the strategy to defend the country.<sup>47</sup> These two reasons figured strongly in Husayn's decision, but he was almost certainly reacting to other pressures. Glubb's strategy for defense was not acceptable to Husayn because it did not take into account the demands of Arab solidarity within Jordan. Glubb simply wanted to defend Jordan from Israel. Husayn had to placate the West Bank Palestinians and convince them that the Jordanian Kingdom would never abandon them to the Israelis. Husayn felt that Glubb was too cautious and that Jordan, as "*a young and impetuous country*" needed a more aggressive approach.<sup>48</sup>

According to Haykal, news of Glubb's dismissal came as a complete surprise to Nasser. At the time, Nasser was in a meeting with British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd. Haykal wrote that at first Nasser believed that Glubb left as a result of a change in British policy, and he remarked, "*What an intelligent move...so they really are sincere in their talk about starting a new page.*"<sup>49</sup> Nasser may have actually been

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<sup>47</sup> Hussein, *Uneasy Lies the Head*, p. 130.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 137.

<sup>49</sup> Haykal, *The Cairo Documents*, p. 81.

surprised, but the British diplomat did not believe it. Following the meeting, Lloyd informed Eden that he believed Nasser had instigated the dismissal.<sup>50</sup>

Husayn was not controlled by Nasser's propaganda machine, and probably did not believe that Glubb was simply an agent of Britain. He knew Glubb's record of loyalty too well. But he did see that many Jordanians felt they were not in complete control of their destiny, and this caused much of the unrest in his country. His ministers, many of whom sympathized with the nationalists in Jordan who wanted British influence ended, were also influencing Husayn. Eden disagreed with Lloyd's assessment that Nasser was behind Husayn's decision. He believed that at most, Nasserist officers who were advising Husayn affected him. He wrote that these officers talked Husayn into the dismissal in order to restore his own popularity, and that, "*The dismissal of Glubb was a completely Jordanian affair.*"<sup>51</sup>

The King also saw that the Legion, who had supported him loyally during the Baghdad Pact Crisis, was his most important power base. He could not afford to have Glubb continue to control the army and the power. Husayn wrote, "...since the Arab Legion was the single strongest element in Jordan, he (Glubb) was, paradoxically, one of the most powerful single forces in our country."<sup>52</sup> In his conversations with the British Ambassador just following Glubb's dismissal, Husayn admitted that he was angry at newspaper accounts in Britain that portrayed Glubb as having the real power in Jordan.<sup>53</sup> He felt he could no longer tolerate the power, even perceived power,

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<sup>50</sup> Eden, *Full Circle*, p. 81.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p. 82.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p. 131.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p. 389.

which Glubb wielded in Jordan. Glubb had been the military commander for 17 years. He was an institution in the Legion. Husayn had to reclaim the army from Glubb, and become its focus. He could not do that as long as Glubb was in Jordan.

Younger Legion officers such as Ali Abu Nuwar greatly influenced Husayn. Abu Nuwar was a Lieutenant Colonel who had distinguished himself in the fighting in 1948. He was a nationalist and associated with the Free Officers.<sup>54</sup> He had spoken out against Glubb and British influence in Jordan during Talal's reign. Glubb did not trust him and sent him to be the military attaché in France. During this time, Husayn was a cadet at Sandhurst, and met Abu Nuwar during his travels in Europe. Abu Nuwar returned to Jordan at Husayn's request and became a powerful influence on the king. He represented the Arab officers of the Legion who were becoming politicized and demanding more power in the army than Glubb was willing to give.

After Glubb's dismissal, Major General Raadi Annabi, who had served as the assistant chief of staff for administration under Glubb, took over command. But in a rash move only three months later, Husayn promoted Ali Abu Nuwar from Lieutenant Colonel to Major General, and gave him command of the newly formed Jordanian Arab Army.<sup>55</sup> He later led the 1956 attempted coup against Husayn, and was banished to Syria.

Husayn gambled that his firing of Glubb would not alienate the British Government. His gamble proved correct. Despite the protests, the British continued to support Jordan. The Anglo-Jordanian Treaty survived and British officers remained

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<sup>54</sup> El Erdoos, *The Hashemite Arab Army*, p. 317.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p. 316.

in the Legion. Jock Dalglish, the fiery Scottish officer who had been Husayn's flying instructor, stayed on to command the RAF contingent in Jordan and was a close confidant of Husayn. Brigadier Michael Strickland, an army officer who had served under Glubb but was not involved in the Baghdad Pact riots, continued to serve in Jordan until 1959. He is credited with repairing the rift that existed between Jordan and Britain after Glubb's dismissal.

Glubb's legacy is still evident in the Jordanian Army today. A film shown to officers prior to beginning training courses mentions the important role Glubb played in forming the Army. In the post-Glubb era, the official name of the army changed from the Arab Legion, to the "Jordan Arab Army." But the officer's rank epaulets still bear the old name "*al-Jaish al-Arabi*" or "Arab Legion."



## Chapter Four

### September, 1970: Husayn and the PLO

#### Timeline

1959-	<i>Fatah</i> founded in Kuwait
1964-	PLO founded in Cairo at Arab Summit
June 5 1967-	Israelis attack Egypt, Syria, beginning June War
21 March 1968-	Battle of Karama
February, 1969-	Yasir Arafat becomes Chairman of the PLO
December, 1969-	First Rogers Peace Plan
June, 1970-	Second Rogers Plan
1 September 1970-	PLO attack Husayn's military convoy
6 September 1970-	PFLP hijack three commercial airliners
9 September 1970-	BOAC airliner hijacked by PFLP
15 September 1970-	Husayn dissolves cabinet, appoints military gov't
16 September 1970-	Crackdown on PLO begins
20 September 1970-	Syrian forces invade Jordan
22 September 1970-	Jordanians defeat Syrian forces
25 September 1970-	Cairo Meeting-Peace agreement signed
July, 1971-	PLO expelled from Jordan

More than any other Arab country, the Palestinian question concerns us Jordanians directly. As a result, we welcomed the principle behind the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and were ready to give it our unreserved support, with only one condition: the P.L.O had to cooperate with Jordan without a trace of friction.<sup>1</sup> (King Husayn)

He said to the King, 'You say you can eliminate them. All right, if you say you can, you can. But the price will be too high. How can you rule over a country after a civil war which will cost you twenty or thirty thousand people? You will rule over a kingdom of wandering ghosts.' And he said to the guerrillas, 'Don't think that you can face a modern army. If he decided to liquidate you, then he could. Don't overestimate your power. You must try to coexist.'<sup>2</sup> (Haykal quoting Nasser)

<sup>1</sup> Hussein, King of Jordan, *My War with Israel*, New York: William Morrow and Company, 1969, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Haykal, *The Cairo Documents*, p. 2 (Nasser to Husayn and Arafat during peace negotiations).

This chapter discusses the events leading to the Jordanian Civil War of 1970 and the expulsion of the Palestinian *fedayeen* from Jordan. Pro-Palestinian sentiment among the Arabs especially after the battle of Karama, forced Husayn to tolerate Palestinian guerrillas in his country, even when they threatened his rule. The *fedayeen* captured the imagination of the Arabs after the defeat of the Arab States in 1967, and their popularity grew. When Palestinian guerrillas threatened stable Hashimite rule, the king tolerated them because of their popularity within Jordan. But when the Jordanian army grew rebellious in the face of unchallenged and inflammatory PLO activity and when Husayn felt he had the necessary Arab and international support, he expelled them using whatever means he felt necessary.

While the events of the 1967 Six-Day War in which Jordan lost the West Bank to Israel fall outside the scope of this study, several background points should be mentioned. On June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1967, the Israeli air force launched a surprise attack on Egyptian airfields and Israeli troops invaded the Sinai Peninsula. In a lightning victory, the Israelis seized the Sinai and Gaza, and the Egyptian air force was destroyed on the ground. Syria and Jordan, also targets of Israeli attacks, suffered great losses in territory. Syria lost the strategic Golan Heights on its southwestern border. Jordan lost the West Bank, including the city of Jerusalem, the site of several of Islam's holiest sites. By June 7, Jordan's army, considered by many analysts to be the best Arab army in the field, was humiliated. Jordan had more casualties than any other participating country except Egypt, losing 700 killed and 1,500 wounded or

missing from its 55,000-man army. One armor brigade lost 82 tanks out of 90.<sup>3</sup> The Jordanian Air Force lost every one of its 21 fighter aircraft.<sup>4</sup>

Jordan's military losses were great, but the loss of territory sparked a demographic change that was to prove even more serious. Jordan had always had a large Palestinian population, sometimes in conflict with its Transjordanian "East Bankers." As a result of the 1967 war, 200,000 Palestinian refugees crossed the Jordan River to the East Bank, adding to the 600,000 already living there. At the time, the total population of Jordan was about 2 million.<sup>5</sup> Jordan lost the West Bank, and many Palestinians remained in the no Israeli occupied East Bank. But those that moved west caused great demographic strain on the predominantly Transjordanian East Bank.

Even prior to the 1967 war, Palestinians who longed for a country of their own depended on Nasser and other Arab leaders to defeat the Israelis and win back the land they lost after 1948. The shattering defeat of the Six-Day War showed many Palestinians that they would have to do more on their own to win a country. Nasser and Husayn began to see that a peace treaty with Israel was the only solution. UN resolution 242, passed on November 22, 1967, called for Israel to withdraw from the territory it had occupied during the war. While this aim appealed to Palestinians, the resolution also affirmed the right of Israel to exist. Nasser and Husayn might have welcomed the UN resolution, but the Palestinian Liberation Organization, of which more will be mentioned later, did not. The Palestinians wanted to return to land they

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<sup>3</sup> Lunt, *Hussein of Jordan*, p. 107.

<sup>4</sup> Erdoos, *The Hashemite Arab Army, 1908-1979*, p. 430.

<sup>5</sup> Clinton Bailey, *Jordan's Palestinian Challenge, 1948-1983*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1984, p. 31.

lost to the Israelis in 1948 and in 1967. They saw armed struggle as the only solution. In this climate, the *fedayeen* movement grew.

Following the 1948 war, several militant Palestinian groups formed in an attempt to win back the land they had lost. Initially, most groups fought under the control of the various Arab countries. Later, a few more independent groups like *Harakat Tahrir Filastin* or the Movement for the Liberation of Palestine (using the acronym *Fatah*, which also means “conquest” in Arabic) were formed and were more independent. Yasir Arafat, an engineer working in Kuwait who came from the al-Husayni family of Jerusalem, founded *Fatah* in 1959 along with several other Palestinians. The success of the 1954-1962 Algerian War, in which Islamic insurgents overthrew a government and defeated a conventional army through protracted guerrilla war, further inspired the Palestinians. Various other organizations were formed, including the Marxist People’s Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) under George Habash, and the Maoist Democratic Popular Front (DPF) under Nayaf Hawatmah. Two groups formed under the influence of the Iraqi and Syrian Ba’thist parties, Arab Liberation Front (ALF) and *Sa’iqa* (Thunderbolt), respectively. The members of these groups were guerrilla fighters, and were known as *fedayeen* or “those who sacrifice.” All of these groups were independent of one another, and in some cases held conflicting ideologies.

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), conceived by Nasser and organized after the first Arab Summit Conference in Cairo in 1964, was an umbrella organization for these groups. Nasser appointed Ahmad Shuqayri as chairman of the PLO. Shuqayri was a bombastic orator who alienated non-Arab governments with his

constant calls for the total destruction of Israel. He was closely associated with the Arab governments, and after the humiliation of 1967, he was discredited in the eyes of the various *fedayeen* factions.

Even before 1967, the PLO and its factions were in direct conflict with King Husayn. Nasser, according to one analyst, directed the formation of the PLO in order to undermine Husayn's rule.<sup>6</sup> The members of the PLO wanted their own country, free of Israel and any other outside power, including the Hashimite family. Many Palestinians resented the fact that Husayn's grandfather Abdullah had been in contact with Jewish leaders in Palestine prior to the 1948 war and brokered a deal with the Israelis in order to annex the West Bank after the war. King Husayn considered the West Bank to be part of Jordan, and the Palestinians who lived there were granted Jordanian citizenship. He, like his grandfather, wanted to maintain Hashimite control of the West Bank. Husayn wrote, "*The Palestinians living in Jordan had become Jordanian citizens without restrictions of any kind, and under no conditions did we wish to offer up the Hashemite kingdom to the divisions which existed elsewhere.*"<sup>7</sup> Husayn's close political associate, Wasfi al-Tal, was Prime Minister from February 1965 to March 1967. He held anti-PLO views, and during his tenure, he attempted to limit its power. Husayn and Wasfi al-Tal temporarily closed the PLO's Jordanian offices in June 1966.

In August 1967, still reeling from the defeat two months earlier, representatives from the various Arab countries met at Khartoum, Sudan, to regroup

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Nevo and Ilan Pappé, *Jordan in the Middle East: The Making of a Pivotal State*, Essex, England: Frank Cass, 1994, p. 69.

<sup>7</sup> Hussein, *My War with Israel*, p. 22.

from the disaster. One result of the conference was that several oil producing states, including Saudi Arabia, Libya and Kuwait agreed to subsidize two of the participants in the war who lost the most, Egypt and Jordan. The payments totaled \$392 million per year, two-thirds of which would go to Egypt.<sup>8</sup> The conference did not emphasize the plight of the Palestinians, and no comparable monetary aid was set aside for the *fedayeen*.

When the Israelis occupied the West Bank, the *fedayeen* factions lost their bases of operation. Jordan seemed the obvious place to begin new operations: it had a long border with Israel, and much of the population was sympathetic to the *fedayeen*. Most of them moved into bases in Jordan, though smaller numbers also went to Egypt and Syria. Husayn wished to avoid another confrontation with Israel and sensed the danger of uncoordinated *fedayeen* cross-border operations into Israel from Jordan. On September 5, 1967, he made a speech denouncing any military operations which “*are not part of a comprehensive Arab plan.*”<sup>9</sup> Syria, Iraq and Egypt supported the guerrillas, providing some material aid. The PLO factions in Syria were much more tightly controlled. The Syrian government banned public demonstrations, display of weapons, and unauthorized raids on Israel. After the 1967 defeat, the Palestinians were not a priority for the Arab countries. They would need a victory to change Arab public opinion. The opportunity came in March of 1968.

Despite Husayn's admonitions against cross-border operations, the *fedayeen* in Jordan continued their war against Israel. Their numbers were still small. At this time

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<sup>8</sup> Malcom Kerr, *The Arab Cold War, Gamal Abd-al Nasir and His Rivals 1958-1970*, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971, p. 139.

<sup>9</sup> Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, p.177.

there were 600-1000 total fighters in Jordan, and 500 were from *Fatah*.<sup>10</sup> The operations of the guerrilla groups caused a great deal of friction with the Jordanian army, which was trying to keep peace on the border. The guerrillas cared only about attacking Israel. In early March 1968, Israeli troops attacked the Jordanian border town of Karama, a *fedayeen* base, in retaliation for previous guerrilla attacks. The Israelis clashed with Jordanian units, causing heavy damage to civilian areas. On 15 March 1968, Jordanian units reacted to the Israeli retaliatory raid by demanding that the guerrillas disarm and cease operations. Clearly the Jordanians were more worried about avoiding more raids than avenging their losses to Israel.

The *fedayeen* would not cooperate, and the Jordanian army troops in the area were not strong enough to force them to disarm. Seeing that the *fedayeen* threat remained, the Israelis decided to clear the town of guerrillas. On 21 March, two Israeli armor brigades and two infantry brigades, supported by engineers and artillery, attacked. The attack went as planned and the Israelis soon controlled the area. The Israeli objective was simply to clear the town, not to hold it. In the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup>, they began to withdraw. As they moved back to the border, they came under heavy fire from both the Jordanian 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division and the remnants of the defeated *fedayeen*. The Israelis were forced to abandon four tanks and five other vehicles, mostly to Jordanian Army anti-armor weapons. They lost 28 dead and 90 wounded: a high price in comparison with their normally low casualty figures during these raids.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid. p. 177.

The Jordanian Army lost 61 dead and 108 wounded, plus 13 tanks destroyed. The guerrillas lost a total of 116 dead and 100 wounded.<sup>11</sup>

The battle for Karama, though not a significant defeat for the Israelis, was seen as a huge victory for Arabs still reeling from 1967. The Jordanian army did most of the damage, but the well-executed *fedayeen* publicity campaign following the battle ensured that it would be seen by the Arab world as a victory for the guerrillas. The Israeli Army was no longer invincible. Jubilant guerrillas paraded Israeli tanks through Amman. *Fatah* controlled the publicity, and reaped the largest share of the credit. Its leader, Yasir Arafat, rose in popularity. His picture began to appear in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan.

The popularity of the *fedayeen* rose dramatically, and with the increased popularity came increased numbers. Young men left the refugee camps to join the freedom fighters. King Husayn could no longer control the guerrillas' raids or the guerrillas themselves. He could only watch as the raids into Israel increased. In February 1969, three *fedayeen* factions, *Fatah*, *Sa'iqa* and the PLF, formed the Palestine Armed Struggle Command to coordinate raids into Israel. By 1970, the various factions had grown dramatically in size. *Fatah* could claim a force of 10,000. *Sa'iqa* had 5,000 fighters and the PFLP had 3,000.<sup>12</sup> Particularly galling to Husayn was the fact that many young Palestinians with Jordanian citizenship were avoiding conscription into the army by joining a guerrilla group.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 178-179. Official Jordanian Army casualty estimates are much higher for both sides. See Erdoos, *The Hashemite Arab Army*, p. 440.

<sup>12</sup> George Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Ithica: Cornell Univ. Press, 1980, p. 493.

<sup>13</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, p. 244.



The *fedayeen* continued attacks into Israel, provoking retaliatory raids by Israeli forces into Jordan that were extremely damaging to the Jordanian infrastructure. Israeli warplanes targeted the East Ghur Canal Project, which provided irrigation to East Bank farms, and the damage severely hurt agricultural production. Because of Israeli artillery attacks, the farmers had to flee the Jordan valley and move eastward.

By the summer of 1968, most of the guerrilla camps had also moved east to be out of Israeli Artillery range. They set up bases of operation in the cities of Amman, Irbid, Jerash, Ajlun and Salt. Armed guerrillas, arrogant from their "victory" at Karama, swaggered in the streets, taunting Jordanian soldiers. As a result of the victory, the guerrilla groups began to directly challenge King Husayn's authority. In August 1968, a guerrilla group denied the king entry to its headquarters in Salt.<sup>14</sup> The *fedayeen* totally controlled the areas they operated in, and formed a "state within a state" inside Jordan. Guerrilla vehicles moved on the streets with no registration or license plates. Jordanian soldiers resented the guerrillas, who they regarded as an undisciplined rabble. One Palestinian NCO in the army said, "*It was more than I could stand. We were the proper soldiers, not the so-called commandos, who couldn't hit a target at fifty paces if you gave them a hundred dinars.*"<sup>15</sup>

Though there was resentment, there was also some support for the guerrillas within the army. Some junior officers, especially those stationed near the Israeli border felt that the *fedayeen* were sacrificing more than the Jordanian army in the

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<sup>14</sup> Bailey, *Jordan's Palestinian Challenge, 1948-1983*, p. 34.

<sup>15</sup> Lunt, *Hussein of Jordan*, p. 122.

struggle with Israel. In fact, the Jordanian army was actively avoiding any conflict with Israeli forces.<sup>16</sup> Despite their efforts, the guerrillas were not achieving much military success in their raids. By the end of 1968, two thirds of the deep penetration attacks conducted by the *fedayeen* were discovered by Israeli counter reconnaissance forces, and by 1969, Israeli jails held 2800 *fedayeen* prisoners.<sup>17</sup>

Why did Husayn accept the behavior of the guerrillas and the threat of renewed conflict with Israel? He was under great pressure from Nasser and other Arab leaders, and from his own Palestinian population to support the PLO because they were the only remaining Arabs actively challenging Israel. Nasser was still popular in the Arab world and Husayn needed Nasser's support to legitimize his rule, especially to Jordan's Palestinian majority. The *fedayeen* were "rescuing Arab dignity" and Husayn wanted to be seen by his population as supporting them.<sup>18</sup> In one interview, attempting to show solidarity with the guerrillas, he said, "*I think we have come to the point now where we are all fedayeen.*"<sup>19</sup> But the *fedayeen* flaunting of Jordanian laws and hostility toward Jordanian soldiers, Husayn's strongest power base, was becoming too much for the King to bear.

In October 1968, Husayn imposed restrictions on PLO activities, outraging the guerrillas and provoking clashes between them and the army. He soon rescinded the restrictions in order to avoid further conflict. But the *fedayeen* continued their behavior, and a month later Husayn and *fedayeen* leaders concluded the "November

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<sup>16</sup> Bailey, *Jordan's Palestinian Challenge*, p.42.

<sup>17</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, p. 203.

<sup>18</sup> Bailey, *Jordan's Palestinian Challenge*, p. 31.

<sup>19</sup> Lunt, *Hussein of Jordan*, p. 108.

Agreement" which restricted PLO activity in cities, and required guerrillas to comply with Jordanian laws.

But soon there was more unrest. On November 5<sup>th</sup>, during a Palestinian student demonstration in Amman, an army vehicle was fired on from the crowd. In retaliation, the army attacked *Fatah* and PFLP headquarters in refugee camps in Amman and Zarqa. The result was 29 dead and 100 wounded from both sides.<sup>20</sup> The conflict was heating up, and Husayn realized he had to regain control of his country.

Factions of the *fedayeen* were not united in their ideology, and there was a great deal of internal discord, especially about their conduct within Jordan. Yasir Arafat, the *Fatah* leader gained popularity after the battle of Karama. He became chairman of the PLO in 1969. But during the late 1960's, he had to work with other faction leaders, who did not agree with his ideas. *Fatah* doctrine stressed non-intervention on the domestic affairs of the countries from which they operated (i.e. Jordan). Arafat favored working with Husayn, rather than fostering an atmosphere of constant confrontation. He wrote that "*internal Arab stability*" was vital for Palestinian victory.<sup>21</sup> But other faction leaders saw their roles much differently. George Habash, the Christian leader of the Marxist PFLP, felt he had no reason to work with Husayn or support his rule. His group and the other non-Islamic oriented factions (Marxist or Maoist) tried to outdo one another with inflammatory rhetoric. One group, in order to provoke discord in the capital, raised the red Communist flag

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<sup>20</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, p. 184.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 244.

from mosque minarets to celebrate Lenin's birthday.<sup>22</sup> Habash wanted parity with Arafat, and this internal struggle had important implications for the coming crisis.

Another potential weakness of the PLO factions was their total unwillingness to foster pragmatic alliances with other groups within Jordan, and to maintain their support from other countries. They saw Nasser's warming to a peace with Israel as totally unacceptable, and criticized him for it, not realizing that he was an important ally whose support they would soon urgently need.

Husayn desperately wanted the PLO out of his country, but he also had to regain the initiative as the true leader of the Palestinians. His main objective was to return the West Bank to Jordan. To do this he had to make peace with the Israelis. If he could regain the lost land, he could render the PLO irrelevant. With popular Palestinian support, he could rid himself of the *fedayeen*. As yet he had no prospect of a peace treaty, so he attempted to do what he could to counter the guerrilla movement and regain the initiative.

He reinforced his relationship with the East Bank population, and strengthened his ties to his most important power base, the army. He activated a military organization called the Mobilization and Moral Guidance Branch, which published two magazines, *al-Aqsa* and *al-Jundi*, which targeted soldiers as their readers. These magazines stressed Arab nationalism, conservative Islamic values, and the importance of family. The leftist guerrillas, never named outright, were the indirect targets of many attacks. The magazines decried Atheism and "effete urban intellectualism" as the source of all that was wrong in Jordanian society. Husayn also distributed 60,000

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 244.

copies of the Qur'an to the soldiers.<sup>23</sup> This "morality campaign" within the army revealed that Husayn knew he would need the support of the average soldiers, not just the commanders. He had to win the average soldier from the guerrillas.

Despite constant *fedayeen*-related incidents inside Jordanian towns, Husayn avoided further crackdowns. In December 1969, the United States unveiled a plan, conceived with Soviet cooperation, to negotiate peace between Israel and Egypt. It was a State Department initiative called the Rogers Plan, after Nixon's Secretary of State, William P. Rogers. The Plan included an end to the state of war between the two countries and Israeli withdrawal from territory if had occupied after the 1967 War. At the same time, Rogers outlined a similar plan to end Israeli/Jordanian hostilities. It included a call for Israel to relinquish the West Bank, and Husayn supported the plan. The king traveled to Washington, meeting publicly with President Nixon, and secretly with Israeli diplomats. On the same day as his meeting with Nixon, *fedayeen* commandos shelled the Israeli resort city of Eilat with Katyusha rockets, wounding ten people.<sup>24</sup> Husayn was outraged. The PLO had showed the world that the king could not control events in his own country and seriously damaged his credibility in negotiating a peace treaty. The Israelis retaliated by once again attacking the Ghor irrigation canal. In December, the Israelis rejected the Rogers Plan, but Husayn's desire to rid himself of the guerrillas grew stronger.

In February 1970, after more guerrilla incidents that provoked additional Israeli retaliatory raids, Husayn resolved to find a solution to the problem. He sought

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 245.

<sup>24</sup> Bailey, *Jordan's Palestinian Challenge*, p. 44.

and received Nasser's support to impose severe restrictions on *fedayeen* operations within Jordan. He knew this would provoke outrage and conflict. He required that all Palestinian guerrillas conscripted into the army must report for military service with the Jordanian army. He also required that Jordanian ID cards and vehicle license plates be carried, rather than PLO identification. He banned unauthorized possession of arms and ammunition, and banned unauthorized demonstrations. Arafat tried to avoid bloodshed, but as Husayn expected, the *fedayeen* protested. In a riot in Amman, 300 people were killed.<sup>25</sup> Nasser, not wanting to be associated with the killing of more Palestinians, backed away from his approval. Without Nasser's support, Husayn was forced to rescind his restrictions. Once again the PLO had won, but they failed to realize how important Nasser's support was. The PLO only began to understand the value of his support after they lost it.

In June 1970, Secretary Rogers announced a second Middle East peace initiative, this time without Soviet involvement. This plan called for a three-month cease-fire and renewed negotiations. Both Nasser and Husayn publicly approved the plan. The PLO denounced them both as betraying the Palestinian cause. At this point Husayn must have seen that Nasser's support for *fedayeen* was an impediment to the Egyptian President's strong desire to conclude some kind of peace with Israel, and the support might not last much longer. Israel agreed to the plan after negotiating arms sales with the US, and on August 7, 1970, a temporary cease-fire went into effect.

The summer of 1970 saw wide-ranging Jordanian army activity against the *fedayeen*. On May 2 Husayn ordered the army to seize two guerrilla camps and on

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 46-47.

June 7, fighting near Zarqa left thirty dead. Arafat may have understood that Husayn was beginning to crack down seriously, and that Nasser might not be there to save the PLO. He decided to attempt compromise with the king, but he was involved in an internal struggle with Habash, and did not want to be seen to give in to Husayn. Arafat agreed to a truce, but only if Husayn met specific demands from the PLO, including the dismissal of prominent army officers known for their anti-PLO sentiments. Curiously, Husayn acceded to Arafat's demands perhaps still trying to avoid a violent showdown and the risk of his throne. His actions seemed to waver between decisive action against the guerillas and hesitancy. He was still not ready to use full-force against the PLO. Nasser had not yet completely forsaken the PLO. Further, Ba'thist Iraq strongly supported the PLO, and there were 17,000 Iraqi troops still in Jordan, never having redeployed from the 1967 war.<sup>26</sup> Husayn could not be sure what these troops would do in the event of widespread conflict.

For his part, George Habash had no intention of making peace. On June 10, the PFLP took control of two hotels in Amman, taking 88 guests hostage, including several foreigners. Husayn's Special Forces troops retook the hotels and casualties from the fighting totaled almost 1,000 dead.<sup>27</sup> That same day, the United States Assistant Army Attaché in Jordan, Major Robert Perry, was murdered at his home by *fedayeen* gunmen.<sup>28</sup> In one last act of compromise on June 11, Husayn offered Arafat the position of Prime Minister. Arafat, most likely stunned by the offer, refused.

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<sup>26</sup> Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organization*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984, p. 50. Kerr estimates the Iraqi numbers at 20-30,000. See Malcom Kerr, *The Arab Cold War*, p. 149.

<sup>27</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, p. 251.

<sup>28</sup> Lunt, *Hussein of Jordan*, p. 126.

Perhaps Husayn knew Arafat could not accept the job and remain dominant in the PLO. In any case, Husayn could say he tried one last time to make peace, and Arafat, the most moderate of the faction leaders, had refused his offer.

On July 22, Nasser accepted a cease-fire agreement with Israel in accordance with the Rogers Plan. The Voice of Palestine, the PLO radio station based in Cairo, denounced Nasser for his support of the Rogers Plan and the subsequent cease-fire. Nasser did not tolerate criticism of his regime from within his own country, and promptly shut down the station. He angrily withdrew political support for the guerrilla factions. The *fedayeen* had lost their most important benefactor. Husayn now had more room to act decisively.

In August, the Jordanian army began shelling refugee camps around Amman, trying to dislodge the *fedayeen*. On September 1, the PLO stuck back. Husayn was travelling near the Amman airport when guerrillas attacked his military convoy. Husayn and his soldiers fought their way out of the ambush, and his troops retaliated, killing thirty-three Palestinians and wounding 160.<sup>29</sup>

Several of the king's field commanders wanted to conduct immediate all-out attacks on the PLO, and Husayn had to rein them in order control events. He even had to face a threat of coup from the long serving Bedouins, who warned, "*if the Hashimite family would not protect them...then it was time for native Transjordanians to rule themselves.*"<sup>30</sup> The U.S. State Department, monitoring the activities in Jordan, received reports that some leaders within the Army were considering a mutiny to

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<sup>29</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, p. 259.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 260.



unilaterally react to the PLO provocations.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps the threat of losing army support was the catalyst that finally drove Husayn to decide to rid himself of the *fedayeen*. He began by recalling units from the Israeli border and deploying them closer to the PLO centers of power.

Yasir Arafat met the king's actions with an appeal to his colleagues for moderation. But George Habash was not in a moderate mood. On September 6, the PFLP hijacked three commercial airliners, a Pan-American and a Swissair flight in Jordan and a TWA in Cairo. Three days later, a BOAC flight was hijacked to Zarqa. The crisis had become international, and the U.S. and European governments mobilized to deal with it. In addition to the hijackings, guerrilla elements took over the northern city of Irbid, and set up a "people's government" independent of Jordanian rule. Arafat had lost the momentum within his organization, and was forced to go along with the extreme elements of the PLO to remain relevant. Habash's men blew up two of the aircraft, and the hostages were later released, though this did not diffuse the crisis.

On September 15 Husayn dismissed his cabinet and appointed a military government led by retired general Muhammad Dawud. Dawud was a Palestinian, and perhaps this was a signal from Husayn to the Palestinian population that he was against the PLO and not the Palestinians themselves. Husayn fired his Army chief of staff who had complained that he was not being given enough control of the army. The king was now in direct control of his army and declared martial law in the

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<sup>31</sup> Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1979, p. 603.

country. He had backing from Nasser and had consolidated his own power. Now he had the opportunity to eliminate the PLO from Jordan.

The Jordanian army was much more heavily armed than the guerrillas were. At the time, Husayn could call upon 65,000 soldiers (plus 10,000 police and paramilitary troops), 330 tanks, 350 armored personnel carriers, 1,500 mortars and recoilless rifles, 100 artillery pieces, and thirty-two combat aircraft.<sup>32</sup> The *fedayeen* had perhaps 15,000 members, of which only 9,000 were full-fledged fighters. They had twenty-five recoilless rifles and 150 anti-tank rockets with which to counter the Jordanian armor, fifty machine guns, and perhaps 150 light and medium mortars.<sup>33</sup>

Husayn ordered his troops to attack the PLO strongholds in the major cities on 16 September. The fighting was very heavy, and initially Husayn's men had difficulty in rooting the *fedayeen* out of the built-up neighborhoods, especially in Amman. The PLO fighters fought from concrete buildings in residential areas. For ten days, the operation continued, with Jordanian artillery shelling refugee camps and suspected strongholds. Casualty figures differ, but the death toll on the Palestinian side, combining fighters and non-combatants, is estimated at 3,400 people.<sup>34</sup>

Through his actions, Nasser had given Husayn the green light to act against the PLO, but he never intended for Husayn to completely destroy the movement. Many times during the fighting, Nasser called on Husayn to stop the bloodshed. But Husayn refused. Perhaps he knew that Nasser needed him as a partner in negotiations with Israel, and he could complete the destruction without worrying about losing Nasser as

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<sup>32</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, p. 263.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p.

<sup>34</sup> Bailey, *Jordan's Palestinian Challenge, 1948-1983*, p.57.

an ally.<sup>35</sup> His fear of upsetting army commanders who were at the point of defeating the PLO might have also kept him from ending the fighting prematurely. In any case, Husayn's earlier hesitancy in regards to the PLO was gone, and he was free to eradicate the "state within a state" he previously had to endure.

The Iraqi troops stationed in Jordan proved no threat. They were recalled to Baghdad on 17 September, perhaps to avoid being drawn into fighting for which they were not prepared. But Husayn had another challenge to face. On 20 September, Syria sent a reinforced armored division with over 200 Soviet-made T-55 tanks across the border into Jordan to aid the PLO fighters.<sup>36</sup> By September 21, Syrian troops controlled the northern Jordanian town of Irbid. Husayn's troops were defeating the PLO guerrillas, but the king realized he would need help answering the Syrian threat. Husayn then turned to the United States for help.

At this point events that were taking place thousands of miles away in Washington, DC need to be described. After the airline hijackings, the local crisis became international. When Soviet-backed Syria invaded Jordan, a moderate Arab State friendly to the US, the now international crisis took on Cold War implications. Perhaps Husayn saw this, and took advantage of it.

The United States was embroiled in the Vietnam War, and was attempting to extricate itself. On July 25, 1969, just before an international trip, Nixon gave a speech that described a new foreign policy initiative. The US would no longer involve itself directly with nations struggling against hostile powers; instead, it would require that

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 59.

<sup>36</sup> Erdoos, *The Hashemite Arab Army*, p. 455.

*“threatened nations supply their own man power.”*<sup>37</sup> In Southeast Asia, this US attempt to use local troops to do the majority of the fighting was called “Vietnamization.” The policy also had international implications. In the Middle East, where the Nixon administration had little experience and no inclination for deep involvement, the results of the 1967 war were important. Israel had won decisively and Israel was a U.S. ally. Nixon and Kissinger wanted to use Israel as a proxy force in the event of a crisis in the region. The Jordan crisis in 1970 became a test of this policy, and the salvation for Husayn and his rule.

President Nixon and his national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, saw the world through the lens of the Cold War. Every player was either on the side of the U.S. or of the Soviet Union. Both men exaggerated the Soviet ability to affect world events. In his account of the crisis, Kissinger described the Syrian invasion of Jordan as nothing more than Soviet-sponsored aggression, a challenge where, *“if we failed to act, the Middle East Crisis would deepen as radicals and their Soviet sponsors seized the initiative.”*<sup>38</sup> Kissinger was determined to limit Soviet influence in the Middle East. He also worried about “radical” Arab movements gaining control of the strategic oil supply in the Middle East and endangering American ability to wage war against the Soviets if the time ever came.<sup>39</sup> When Husayn appealed to the US for help in defeating the Syrian incursion, Kissinger supported his appeal.

The US was not prepared to react directly to the crisis in Jordan. It sent a

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<sup>37</sup> William Bundy, *A Tangled Web: The Making of Foreign Policy in the Nixon Presidency*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1998, p. 526.

<sup>38</sup> Kissinger, *The White House Years*, p. 618.

<sup>39</sup> Bernard and Marvin Kalb, *Kissinger*, Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1974, p. 192.

carrier group in the Mediterranean closer to the area, and put airborne forces in the US and Germany on alert. The Nixon administration had just recovered from the US invasion of Cambodia in May, and the American public was against further military “adventures.” The Americans were logistically unable to deploy an effective force to react to the crisis. The proxy option was much more attractive. Just after the September 20 Syrian invasion, the US appealed to Israel to begin flying reconnaissance missions to assess the situation. As the scope of the invasion became clear, Kissinger asked Israel’s ambassador to the US, Yitzhak Rabin, to request that Israel supply the necessary military force to resolve the situation by driving the Syrians out of Jordan. The Israelis began to put troops on the Golan to force the Syrians to react to a threat from their flank.

Differing accounts exist of what happened during the next few days regarding Israeli involvement in the crisis exist. Kissinger wrote that he asked the Israelis for air strikes against the Syrian armor formations inside Jordan. Another account states that Husayn himself asked for Israeli military action only as a last resort, and only if Israel attacked Syria and did not move into Jordanian territory.<sup>40</sup> Husayn told the US Ambassador in Jordan that he approved of the Israelis intervening “up high” but not “down below” meaning that Israeli ground action would only be welcome in the north in Syria, not in Jordan.<sup>41</sup> Brigadier Erdoos’ account ignores any Israeli involvement. Other accounts, including Israeli versions of events, state that Israel used only the threat of airstrikes and mobilized troops on the Golan Heights to throw the Syrians off

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<sup>40</sup> William Quandt, *Decade of Decisions*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977, p. 116.

<sup>41</sup> William Quandt, *Peace Process*, Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1993, p. 106.

balance enough to allow the Jordanian air force to defeat them.<sup>42</sup> Nixon, despite his as yet limited understanding of the complexities of Middle East relations, knew that overt Israeli military support could seriously damage Husayn's standing in the Arab world.<sup>43</sup> Husayn himself vigorously denied asking for Israeli help, but one analyst states that he "would accept any intervention to save his throne."<sup>44</sup>

If the extent of Israeli involvement is unclear, Jordanian actions are well documented. Jordanian aircraft engaged the Syrian armor in the Irbid area. On September 22 the Jordanian army counterattacked, driving the Syrians back across the border with losses of sixty-two tanks, sixty armored personnel carriers, and 600 casualties.<sup>45</sup> The Syrians did not commit their air force, which would have protected the armor formations vulnerable in the open desert.

There is great dispute as to why Syrian air power was not used in support of its armor. The president of Syria, Dr. Nur al-Din Atasi, was a figurehead leader, and two other men were locked in a struggle for actual control of the country. One was Ba'th Party leader and army general Salah Jadid, and the other was the Defense Minister Hafez al-Asad. Jadid ordered the attack into Jordan. Some analysts feel that Asad, an air force general, held back the planes to force a defeat and humiliate his rival, Jadid. A more likely explanation is that Asad remembered the 1967 defeat, and with the threat of Israeli air power active in the fighting, decided to save his air force from destruction to fight another day. He also wanted to avoid escalation of the crisis.<sup>46</sup> In

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<sup>42</sup> Herzog, *The Arab Israeli Wars*, p. 223.

<sup>43</sup> Bundy, *Tangled Web*, p. 186.

<sup>44</sup> Alan Dowty, *Middle East Crisis*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, p. 169ff.

<sup>45</sup> Syed Ali El-Erdoos, *The Hashemite Arab Army, 1908-1979*, p. 456.

<sup>46</sup> Patrick Seale, *Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 159.

either case, the lack of a coordinated Syrian ground and air attack doomed their operation to failure, with or without Israeli intervention. Despite the losses, Asad benefited from the experience. He came to power in Syria in November of 1970.

Desperate to end the crisis, Nasser called a meeting in Cairo that was to be attended by Arafat and Husayn. Arafat was still missing, in hiding somewhere in Amman. His deputy attended and agreed to a cease-fire plan. But Arafat rejected the plan, and nothing was resolved until Arafat finally arrived in Cairo on September 25<sup>th</sup>. The meeting was attended by the leaders of most Arab countries, which attested to the importance of resolving the crisis within the Arab world. King Sa'ud persuaded Arafat and Husayn to shake hands during the meeting, and the two men reached a truce. Nasser presided over the meeting. It was to be his last official act; he died of a heart attack on September 28.

Despite the agreement, the conflict continued. The two sides reached what was called the Fourteen-Point Agreement. While it did resolve the situation somewhat, it did not require the PLO to follow Jordanian laws. It stated, "*Full support of the Palestinian Revolution is ensured to enable it to carry out its sacred duty – the liberation of its land.*"<sup>47</sup> The truce was not precisely what Husayn wanted but he had cause to be jubilant. He demonstrated to the PLO that he controlled his own country and could draw upon the strength of the United States for support of his throne. On September 26, Husayn replaced his military cabinet with a civilian government and named Wasfi al-Tal as the Prime Minister. Al-Tal would lead the effort over the next year to contain and ultimately to expel the PLO factions remaining in Jordan. The

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p. 458.

PLO continued to operate inside Jordan until July 1971, when the Jordanian Army decisively defeated the *fedayeen* and drove them out of Jordan. Nasser was gone, and the Syrians, despite some saber rattling, did not interfere with Husayn's final efforts to defeat the guerrillas. Almost exactly a year later, al-Tal was assassinated in Cairo by members of a Palestinian terrorist group called "Black September" named after the month in 1970 when Husayn challenged the PLO.

At the time of the crisis, there were 22,000 soldiers of Palestinian origin serving in the Jordanian Army.<sup>48</sup> Husayn must have been concerned that they might desert and fight on the side of the PLO. Some 5,000 soldiers, both East Bank Jordanians and Palestinians, did desert or defect to the PLO. The highest-ranking desertion was a division commander.<sup>49</sup> But most soldiers remained loyal to the king. His true support base could be counted upon once again, to stand in the face of internal opposition and opposition from other Arab countries. Husayn had avoided direct conflict with the PLO until it became clear to him that the Army might act on its own to solve the problem. The fear of losing control of the army caused him to finally act decisively and stop trying to make deals with Arafat.

Most Palestinians living in Jordan did not support the PLO during the crisis. Many had integrated into Jordanian society, and were working in government and private business. Many of these Palestinians resented Husayn and his grandfather for taking over the West Bank after 1948 and ending the chance for an independent state. But by the late 1960's they had been living for over a generation in a real state, with

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<sup>48</sup> Nevo and Pappé, *Jordan in the Middle East 1948-1988*, p.74.

<sup>49</sup> Erdoos, *The Hashemite Arab Army 1908-1979*, p. 459.



relative security, some government aid and real prospects for a future for their families. Most were not willing to give all of this up for a long war with Israel and the mere possibility of a Palestinian state some time in the future. Husayn may have realized he had their grudging, if not wholehearted support after September 1970 and felt free to finally expel the PLO from Jordan the following year.

Husayn's standing in the Middle East suffered after September 1970. Libya and Kuwait suspended payment of their Khartoum subsidies, and President Jafar Nimeiry of Sudan accused Husayn of extermination of the Palestinian people. But the king was again in control of his country and the cross-border conflict with Israel was suspended. The improved conditions in his country more than made up for his September actions against the PLO in the eyes of most of his subjects.

Did Husayn understand the implications of the Nixon Doctrine on his dilemma? Did he believe he could use the Cold War rivalry for his own purposes? He certainly had spoken with Nixon and Kissinger during his visits to Washington, and must have understood that Kissinger believed the Syrians to be controlled by the Soviets. Some analysts feel that if he did attempt to use the US, it is doubtful that he intended that the US ask Israel to use military force against the Syrians, even to save Jordan. He certainly would have preferred US military power. It seems possible that Husayn would have approved of Israeli ground troops in Syria and possibly Israeli air in Jordan to defeat the Syrian attack. Husayn's grandfather had dealt with the Israelis in order to maintain Hashimite rule. Keeping his throne was Husayn's top priority, and whether help came from the Americans or the Israelis, he was going to accept it.

Were the actions Husayn took in 1970 based on long-term thinking? Husayn's main goals were to stay in power and retake the West Bank territory lost in 1967. At first, he saw that he would have to accept the PLO in his country in order to placate the Palestinian population in his country. His constant attempts to make a deal with Arafat, even after blood was shed, seem unbelievable after his decisiveness in the crackdown on unrest after the Baghdad Pact riots. But he was not operating on the basis of one or two main principles. Husayn was doing whatever he had to do to get along in the short term. Given his circumstances, he had little choice but to play for time and endure the *fedayeen* until he knew he could act. He acted decisively only when he realized that Nasser had withdrawn support from the PLO and that his army would act without him if he did not. The king was still playing backgammon, reacting to threats and events he could not necessarily control. But he was becoming very successful at the game.

## Chapter Five

### Balancing Act: Husayn, Jordan and the Gulf War

#### Timeline

November 1979-	Shah overthrown in Iran
September 1980-	Iran/Iraq war begins
July 1988-	Husayn renounces Jordan's claim on West Bank
August 1988-	Iran/Iraq war ends
January 1989-	Jordanian Dinar plummets
November 1989-	First Jordanian elections in 22 years
August 2, 1990-	Iraq invades Kuwait
August 3, 1990-	Husayn telephones President Bush
	Arab League condemns Iraq
August 12, 1990	Saddam's speech promising to link crisis to Palestinian solution
August 19-29, 1990-	Husayn travels to gain support for peace plan
October 8, 1990-	Shootings at Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem
November 5, 1990-	Husayn's speech supporting Palestinian cause
January 15, 1991-	Air Campaign begins
February 6, 1991-	Husayn's Pro-Iraq speech
February 24, 1991-	Ground War begins
February 27, 1991-	Cease-fire implemented
April, 1991-	Secretary of State Baker visits Husayn in Aqaba

"Foreign journalists are questioning us in Jordan today, needing clarification and detail. We do not align with Iraq or Kuwait or Saudi Arabia or Egypt or Syria or Morocco. For the conflict is between the Arabs and the foreign colonial powers which desire control of our revolution and our free will. We align with ourselves, with Arabs. And we do not lay blame on Iraq or its leader Saddam Husayn who have become the symbols of the will and staying power of the Arab Nation."<sup>1</sup> (Dr Fahad al-Fanak, Jordanian newspaper editorial)

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<sup>1</sup> Marwan Barkat ed. *Harb al-Khalij fi al-Suhuf al-Orduniah* (The Gulf War in the Jordanian Press), Amman: The Institute for Study, Publishing and Distribution (*al-Rai* editorial, Dr. Fahad al-Fanak 8/30/90) p. 25. Author's translation.

The Gulf War of 1990-91 will be remembered for images of burning Kuwaiti oil wells, Scud attacks on Dhahran and Tel Aviv, and exhausted, hungry Iraqi soldiers surrendering to American journalists. The war will also be remembered for strange alliances. Israel and Syria were on the same side, and Iran, having just concluded a long and bloody war with Iraq, lent rhetorical, if not military, support to Saddam Husayn. Prior to the war, King Husayn was a staunch ally of the West and a personal friend of President George Bush. His refusal to support the coalition forces in ejecting Saddam's troops from Kuwait continues to endure as a puzzle to many analysts of the region.

In 1990, Husayn was a stable, pro-Western Arab leader in an area increasingly viewed as radical and hostile to the West. U.S. and other leaders needed only to look at the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis or the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983 to appreciate King Husayn of Jordan as a reliable friend in an unstable region. Why then, did Husayn refuse to "do the right thing" and help the coalition liberate Kuwait? Did Husayn really back Saddam, or did he just try to maintain a precarious neutrality? What did he gain by the policy he followed and what did he lose? This chapter attempts to answer these questions and assess the success of Jordanian policy during the crisis.

To effectively analyze the events of 1990 and 1991, one must examine Iraqi-Jordanian relations, the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88 and the part that Jordan played in the war. After the overthrow of the Iraqi Hashimite dynasty in 1958, which resulted in the murder of Husayn's cousin, King Faisal, Jordan and Iraq had a predominantly hostile relationship. In 1970, the Ba'thist regime in Iraq denounced Husayn as a murderer

after he began expelling the PLO from Jordan. In 1975, Jordan began a *rapprochement* with Syria, Iraq's archenemy in the Arab world and Jordanian-Iraqi political relations seemed to reach a low point.

At the same time, trade between the two countries began to grow. In 1979, the two countries signed an agreement to increase bilateral trade to \$19 million.<sup>2</sup> Saddam Husayn, then-second in command in Iraq, personally delivered large amounts of money to King Husayn without the approval of the President of Iraq, Hasan al-Bakr.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps Saddam and others in Iraq, seeing potential value in Jordan as an economic partner, were attempting to heal the political rifts between the two countries. In 1976, Syria closed its air and land corridors to Iraq, forcing Iraqi traders to use the best alternative transport route through the port of Aqaba, in southern Jordan.

Iraq was a wealthy oil producing state, and it was also in Jordan's interests to cultivate the relationship. In early 1980, Iraq granted government loans to Jordan worth \$189.2 million and grants valued at \$58.3 million. The Iraqi government intended this money to be spent on expansion of the port at Aqaba and to improve the road system from Aqaba to the Iraqi border. Saddam Husayn, by then the undisputed leader of Iraq, foresaw the possibility of losing the use of his own port of Basra in his upcoming military adventure with Iran, and wanted to solidify his trading relationship with Husayn and Jordan.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Laurie, A. Brand, *Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations: The Political Economy of Alliance Making*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> Amatzia Baram, "No New Fertile Crescent: Iraqi Jordanian Relations, 1968-1972" in Joseph Nevo and Ilan Pappé ed. *Jordan in the Middle East: The Making of a Pivotal State 1948-1988*, Essex, England: Frank Cass & Co. LTD, 1994, p.121.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 124.

In 1979, Iranian revolutionaries overthrew the pro-western Shah and installed a fundamentalist Shi'a theocracy. Many Arab leaders in the region were concerned that the Shi'a minorities in their own countries would support the revolution exported by the Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers in Iran. At the time, Iraq was the most militarily powerful Arab country, and other Arab countries, especially in the Gulf, supported Saddam Husayn when he decided to invade Iran. When Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, King Husayn traveled to Iraq to congratulate Saddam Husayn on the latter's campaign to defend Arabs from the Persian threat. The king also called on all Arab states to support Iraq during the war. With Iraqi coffers still full of oil revenues, Saddam repaid Husayn handsomely for his support. In October 1981, Saddam authorized another \$4.5 million loan to Jordan to further increase the Aqaba port facility.<sup>5</sup> Trade between the two countries increased dramatically during the war. In 1977 and 1978, Iraqi imports from Jordan amounted to \$8-10 million annually. In 1979, the number jumped to \$47 million. In 1982, the number reached \$209 million.<sup>6</sup> Between 1979 and 1988, the amount of cargo moving through the port at Aqaba increased from 161,000 tons per year to 6,930,000 tons per year; the vast majority of the goods were bound for Iraq.<sup>7</sup> In return for Jordanian support, Iraq exported its oil to Jordan at reduced prices. The Jordan enjoyed an economic boom during the early and mid-1980's due to the trading relationship with Iraq.

At the same time, Jordan was also closely tied to Saudi Arabia and the smaller oil states of the Persian Gulf. Prior to the 1990 Invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, 40 percent

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<sup>5</sup> Brand, *Jordan's Inter Arab Relations*, p. 215.

<sup>6</sup> Baram, "No New Fertile Crescent," p. 126.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 127.

of Jordan's domestic exports were directed to the Gulf States. Three quarters of the tourists who visited Jordan and most of the monetary grants to Jordan came from the Gulf States.<sup>8</sup>

The eight-year war wrecked the economies of Iraq and Iran. Before the war Iraq had been a prosperous oil producing state. When an armistice was reached, the country was in debt and its oil production in shambles. During the mid-1980's a worldwide downturn in oil prices caused the economies of all the oil producing states to slide. Due to the loss of oil revenues, the Gulf States cut off much of the aid that they had been giving to Jordan. The large number of Jordanians living and working in the Gulf suffered losses in salary and stopped sending as much of their money home. As a result, Jordan's economy suffered. In January 1989, the value of the Jordanian Dinar plummeted. For the first time in its history, Jordan was unable to make its scheduled debt payments to other countries, and was facing economic crisis.

The Jordanian government requested assistance from the International Monetary Fund, and in early 1989 an IMF team went to Jordan to assess the situation. Jordan and the IMF reached an agreement in mid-April to take measures to rescue the faltering economy. As part of the IMF plan, the government cut subsidies on petroleum products, cigarettes, and alcohol. The resulting price hikes of those goods caused riots in cities such as Ma'an and Salt, and this time it was East-Bankers who rioted, not Palestinians. Husayn's core of support was cracking, and he had to take action to shore up his position. Prime Minister Zaid Rifai resigned and was replaced by the King's uncle, Zaid bin Shakir. Husayn decided the best way to relieve the

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<sup>8</sup> Gil Feiler, "The Primacy of Exogenous Factors" in Nevo and Pappe, *Jordan in the Middle East*, p. 55

tension that was building was to begin a process of political liberalization in the country. He allowed the first parliamentary elections in 22 years. He also loosened up political restrictions that had previously banned political parties in Jordan, announcing that the government would accept all candidates for the elections scheduled for November 1989. Despite Husayn's ban on political parties, he had tolerated the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, or *Ikhwan*, in order to marginalize the more radical and anti-monarchy Islamic groups. Because of its informal support network, the *Ikhwan* were the most prepared of any party once the political restrictions were lifted. As a result, more than twenty Islamists and another 10-15 Islamist sympathizers were elected to the eighty-member Lower House of Parliament.<sup>9</sup> Husayn and his Prime Minister may have found the strong showing of the Islamists unsettling, but they did nothing to keep the newly elected members from taking their places in the parliament.

At the same time, Husayn scaled back on the activities of the *Mukhabarat*, or the intelligence and security service, which kept track of opposition activities within Jordan. The government no longer required citizens to be investigated by the internal security apparatus before applying for a passport or taking a job in the public sector. The government also loosened restrictions on political debate within the media, especially the newspapers. Several journalists, banned from working since 1988, were again allowed to practice their profession. Finally, Husayn's new government liberalized laws governing public demonstrations. The government authorized many

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<sup>9</sup> Laurie Brand, "Liberalization and Changing Political Coalitions: The Bases of Jordan's 1990-1991 Gulf Crisis Policy" *The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 1991, p.19.



requests for public rallies, and did not break up unauthorized demonstrations by use of force. Jordanians may have been unhappy with their economic situation, but they quickly became used to their new freedoms.

The vast majority of the Jordanian population of Jordan did not see Iraq as a regional threat. Most Jordanians believed the main threat to their country came from Israel. In 1989, thousands of Soviet Jews were allowed to immigrate to Israel, thus increasing the population and triggering the need for more room for settlements. Many in Jordan saw the possibility of further expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank to make room for the immigrants as a potential demographic disaster for Jordan. Finally, in early June 1990, an extremely conservative government took power in Israel, and further heightened Jordanian fears of their western neighbor.

Because of these threatening developments, Iraq and Jordan moved towards a closer military relationship. Jordan saw Iraq with its powerful Arab army as the main bulwark against the perceived Israeli threat. Jordanian officers and soldiers trained in Iraq, including attending Iraqi military courses.<sup>10</sup> Military cooperation reached a peak in 1990, when the two countries developed a joint air squadron.<sup>11</sup> During this time, Israeli military analysts discovered Iraqi warplanes were patrolling the Jordanian-Israeli border.

Along with military cooperation, the economic cooperation was growing stronger. The Arab Cooperation Council was established in 1989, and included Jordan,

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<sup>10</sup> One of the schools Jordanian officers attended was Iraqi Ranger School, similar to the US Army Ranger school, and specializing in small unit, commando-type operations. One Jordanian Special Forces officer recalled his attendance as some of the toughest training he encountered in his career.

<sup>11</sup> Amatazia Baram, "No New Fertile Crescent" p. 131. See also Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 103.

Iraq, North Yemen and Egypt. The participants intended to establish some economic solidarity among their countries, since they were not members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (Saudi Arabia and the smaller Gulf oil states). Formation of the ACC as an economic entity threatened Saudi Arabia causing some tension between it and Jordan.<sup>12</sup> On the eve of the Gulf War, Jordan and Iraq's economic relationship had never been stronger. Iraq was Jordan's largest trading partner. Almost 70 percent of all goods coming into the Aqaba Port were bound for Iraq. Almost 75 percent of Jordan's industrial output was geared to the Iraqi market. Jordan also depended on Iraq for 80-90 percent of its oil.<sup>13</sup>

A detailed analysis of Saddam Husayn's reasons for invading Kuwait is beyond the scope of this study. However, it is important to note Jordan's official version of the reasons leading up to the invasion include the disputes over the Rumailah oil field which both Kuwait and Iraq used. The record also mentions Iraq's dispute over the boundaries of the two countries, to include two strategic islands, Bubiyan and Warba, near the coast, and Kuwait's production of oil over OPEC quotas that drove down the price of oil. The Jordanian government maintains that just prior to the Iraqi invasion, King Husayn traveled to Kuwait to try to persuade the Kuwaitis to concede to some of Iraq's demands in order to avoid a military crisis. *"Unfortunately, the Kuwaiti authorities seemed to have a false sense of security and were reluctant to*

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<sup>12</sup> Laurie Brand, *Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations*, p. 109.

<sup>13</sup> Amatzia Baram, "No New Fertile Crescent," p. 136.

*understand the danger of the situation, and the extreme Iraqi anger with Kuwait at the leadership level.”*<sup>14</sup>

On August 2, 1990, Iraqi Troops invaded Kuwait, quickly defeating all organized resistance. The Gulf Arabs were stunned and horrified that one Arab nation would attack another. Husayn attempted to diffuse the crisis, calling for a summit of Arab leaders to find a solution. President Bush was very concerned, and Husayn telephoned him on the night of August 2, trying to get Bush to give the king time to solve the problem before the U.S. came out with a position on the crisis. In a famous quote attributed to Husayn by many chroniclers, he said, “*Give me twenty-four hours, no more.*”<sup>15</sup> The king organized a summit of Arab leaders including Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and North Yemen to be held in Jeddah on August 5. He even tried to get the Amir of Kuwait to attend, saying that if he did, “*that is halfway to the solution.*”<sup>16</sup> The Iraqis refused to allow the Amir to attend the proposed summit.

The participants hotly dispute the events that followed, but the Jordanian version recounts Saddam Husayn agreeing to begin to withdraw his troops from Kuwait only if the Arab League promised not to condemn Iraq.<sup>17</sup> Without prior notice, the Arab League issued a condemnation of the invasion on August 3. The Egyptian government, which was alleged to have agreed to the earlier plan to avoid condemnation, participated in the condemnation vote. President Mubarak claimed pressure from King Fahd of Saudi Arabia to condemn Iraq. With the Arab League

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<sup>14</sup> Government of Jordan, *White paper: Jordan and the Gulf Crisis*, Amman: Ministry of Information, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Mohammed Hosanain Haykal, *Harb al-Khalij (The Gulf War)*, Cairo: al-Ahram Publishing, p. 383.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 384.

<sup>17</sup> Jordanian Government, *White Paper*, p. 4.

condemnation, Iraq withdrew its offer, the August 5 Jeddah summit was cancelled, and the crisis developed into a stalemate.

Husayn did not cease in his efforts to find a peaceful solution. He did everything he could to keep the dispute internal to the Arab world. Between August 19 and 29, Husayn traveled to Yemen, Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, Spain, France, Italy and Germany to gather support for his mediation efforts. Prior to departing, he announced his support of a peace plan that had been advanced in an earlier form by the PLO. The plan included the following terms:

- The Buildup of troops in the Middle East would halt immediately.
- The Iraq/Kuwait relationship would be similar to the France/Monaco relationship.
- American troops would withdraw from the Gulf, and then Iraqi troops would withdraw from Kuwait, with a UN or Arab peacekeeping force replacing the Iraqis.
- Iraq would retain control of Bubiyan Island.
- The ruling al-Sabah family would be barred from returning to Kuwait.<sup>18</sup>

Despite its pro-Iraqi slant, Saddam Husayn refused to withdraw his forces from Kuwait, and the plan had no support from either side.

Gulf Arab countries criticized Husayn for becoming a puppet of Iraq, or worse. One account of the crisis by the wartime Saudi Military commander wondered aloud if King Husayn prompted Saddam to invade Kuwait. He wrote, "...it was not far-fetched to fear that King Hussein dreamed of retaking the Hejaz, once ruled by his

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<sup>18</sup> Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict: 1990-1991*, p. 162.

great grandfather.”<sup>19</sup> The same author quotes Husayn as saying one month after the invasion that he still considered himself *Sharif* of Mecca, a title passed down to direct descendents of the Prophet, and not shared by the current ruling family of Saudi Arabia.<sup>20</sup> The Saudi account of Husayn’s words may not be accurate, but it certainly sheds light on the mistrust the Saudis felt for Husayn’s efforts to mediate the crisis.

Egyptian President Mubarak was also furious with Husayn for his efforts to solve the crisis, even at Kuwait’s expense. US Secretary of State James Baker visited Mubarak in September 1990 in Alexandria, and according to Baker, Mubarak accused Husayn of conspiring with Saddam to invade Kuwait and divide its wealth. Mubarak believed that at the very least, the Iraqi president had bought off Husayn for the king’s unconditional support.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the Egyptian and Saudi opinions of Husayn, his popularity at home in Jordan was rising because of his stance on the crisis. There were many pro-Saddam demonstrations in the streets of Jordanian cities. One of the largest was sponsored by the Muslim Brotherhood to protest a visit to Jordan by the UN Secretary General. At least 70,000 people attended the event.<sup>22</sup> In many of these demonstrations, marchers carried pictures of Saddam side by side with pictures of Husayn. The pro-Iraqi sentiment crossed all bounds. Palestinian West Banker and Jordanian East Banker, city dweller and Bedouin, Islamist and secularist, all found Saddam’s cause worth supporting. In their view, Saddam was highlighting the disparity between rich and

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<sup>19</sup> HRH General Khalid bin Sultan, *Desert Warrior*, London: Harper Collins, 1995, p. 181.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 210.

<sup>21</sup> James Baker III with Thomas M. DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, New York: GP Putnam’s Sons, 1995. p. 290-291.

<sup>22</sup> Baram, “No New Fertile Crescent” p. 137.

poor Arabs, and trying to redistribute oil wealth. He was also shedding light on the Palestinian question and the fact that UN resolutions against Israeli aggression were ignored while supporters of Israel denounced the Iraqi actions.

On 12 August, Saddam gave a speech in which he promised he would resolve the Kuwait problem if Israel pulled out of Gaza and the West Bank and if Syria pulled out of Lebanon.<sup>23</sup> His speech appealed to the Palestinians, and Husayn, who had relinquished his claims of responsibility to the West Bank in 1988, felt he had to link himself to Saddam in order to maintain the support of the Palestinians in Jordan. Husayn met with many Palestinian leaders during the crisis, including his old enemies from 1970-71, George Habash and Nayaf Hawatmah. He continued to reconcile with other opposition forces, including the Muslim Brotherhood. In January 1991, Husayn included five *Ikhwan* members, including the Minister of Education, in a ministerial cabinet reorganization.<sup>24</sup>

Husayn gave a speech on 5 November in which he attempted to maintain the support of the Palestinian public. He went as far as to recast the battle Karama as a victory for all Jordanians, and not just Palestinians. The speech deserves to be quoted at some length:

We remember how we fought the Nation's wars even when we had been kept in the dark about the date of the battle, how we shed our blood on the plains of Karama, how we told the nation on that rosy morning that we had the upper hand, that the road to Jerusalem lay in our sacrifice...<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> US News and World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, New York: Random House, 1992, p.105.

<sup>24</sup> Baram, "No New Fertile Crescent" p. 137.

<sup>25</sup> Kamel Abu Jaber, "Jordan and the Gulf War" in *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International relations in the Middle East*, Tareq and Jacqueline Ismael, eds. Gainesville: Univ of Florida Press, 1994, p. 379.

Always true to form, Husayn used the same speech to ensure the loyalty of his army. He remembered the close connection formed between the Iraqi and Jordanian soldiers in joint training and operations, and the king believed that he needed to remind the Jordanian soldiers again that he was their leader:

Of the army the martyr king (Abdullah) has said, 'this is an army which does not shame its commanders, does not disappoint its generals, does not let down its people, does not hold back, does not shirk the task of protecting its rights and those of its country. The army is not only an army. It is the country's sword, its shield, its pride, its voice, its whip, the bane of its enemies and the apple of its king's eye.'<sup>26</sup>

The Jordanian media took advantage of their newly acquired freedom by publishing blistering editorials against the invitation of western troops by the Saudi King into the land of Mecca, and the threat of war. One editorial read, "*Saddam Husayn is not Noriega. One million to one and a half million soldiers will die and the war will last years and years until victory is reached, and the (Jordanian) people and the army will be on his (Saddam's) side.*"<sup>27</sup> Another played on the perceived threat western troops posed on Arab women: "*We will not accept violations of the (American) Marines on our sisters in high schools in Riyadh, Jeddah, Mosul, Nada, Amman, and Irbid...*"<sup>28</sup> Clearly, the media was backing Saddam and was doing what it could to stir up anti-Western sentiment among the Jordanian people. On October 8 1990 Israeli police shot several Arabs who had begun throwing rocks at Jews who were praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. 20 Palestinians died as a result and

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p.379.

<sup>27</sup> Marwan Barkat, *Harb al-Khalig fi al-Suhuf al-Ordunia*, *Al Ra'i* news editorial p. 18. Author's translation.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p. 97. Author's translation.

150 more were wounded. The incident occurred at the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, one of Islam's holiest sites, and this further galvanizing anti-West/Israeli feeling in Jordan.

Along with the buildup of coalition troops, the UN authorized an embargo against Iraq in an attempt to force it out of Kuwait. The embargo was devastating to trade between Jordan and Iraq. Jordan had been receiving 83 percent of its oil from Iraq. After the embargo, the oil flow to Jordan slowed to a trickle. All trade with Iraq was illegal, with the exception of Iraqi oil going to pay off Iraq's wartime debts to Jordan. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia offered to make up for the lost oil, by selling Jordan the equivalent of half of Jordan's yearly oil quota from Iraq at the market price of about \$35/barrel. Fahd also offered to write off \$40 million of Jordan's debt. But Jordan had been buying oil from Iraq at \$16.40/ barrel. Husayn responded to the Saudi offer by publicly denouncing Fahd for inviting foreign soldiers onto Saudi soil. In retaliation, Fahd cut off the flow of Saudi oil to Jordan.<sup>29</sup>

His pro-Iraqi rhetoric notwithstanding, Husayn wanted to remain neutral in the coming conflict. In January, the Jordanian Parliament's Lower House had passed a resolution urging "*all the Arab and Islamic nations to strike at American interests and the interests of those nations participating in the aggression against Iraq.*"<sup>30</sup> But Husayn's wish for neutrality and his iron control over security in his country prevailed. Few incidents against Western targets ever took place. Husayn had also studiously avoided public statements directly against the coalition, in an attempt to

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<sup>29</sup> Dilip Hiro, *Desert Shield to Desert Storm: The Second Gulf War*, London: Harper Collins, 1992, p. 197.

<sup>30</sup> Judith Miller, *God Has Ninety-nine Names*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996, p. 353.



maintain a middle ground in the crisis. He was criticized by US politicians for not joining the coalition, but not seen yet as a true ally of Saddam.

On February 6, 1991, three weeks into the air campaign, Husayn made a speech that seemed to clarify to the West his alignment with Iraq and Saddam. He made no mention of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, but he did lament the damage being done to Iraq by coalition air power: *"This bombing started from the first hours and took the form of a war that aims to destroy all the achievements of Iraq and return it to primitive life...All the hopes of your nation and the world community were thwarted the day the land of Iraq was turned into the arena of the Third World War."*<sup>31</sup> He never openly criticized the United States during the speech, but he did link the crisis to the Palestinian question and imply that Iraq was being destroyed in order reduce the power of the Arab people in the world.

Husayn intended to cover all bases with this speech. Though he did decry the damage being inflicted on Iraq so as to placate his pro-Saddam public, he also called for "Iraqi-US" and "Arab-Arab" dialogues to resolve the crisis. He even went as far as placating Christians by mentioning the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the same sentence as the al-Aqsa Mosque, and paying homage to the efforts of Pope John Paul II for his calls for peace during the crisis. He appeased the pro-Iraqi sentiment in his country without explicitly denouncing the West. *"I still cannot understand why my appeal for peace was so misunderstood...I did not mention the United States in my speech"* he told American journalist Judith Miller in an interview after the war.<sup>32</sup> But

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<sup>31</sup> Jordanian Government, *White paper*, p. 62. Entire text of the speech is recorded.

<sup>32</sup> Miller, *God Has Ninety-nine Names*, p. 356.

it was this speech, despite his best efforts, that caused the greatest amount of anger among politicians in the US and other coalition countries.

Iraq was defeated in a quick ground campaign and the allies declared a cease-fire on February 27. The Iraqi military quickly turned to putting down rebellions that sprang up in the North and South of the country as a result of the defeat. Kuwait's ruling family was again in power and began to exact retribution from those in Kuwait that had collaborated with the Iraqi occupiers. Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat was a vocal supporter of Saddam during the war, and Palestinians living in Kuwait bore the brunt of Kuwaiti anger. According to one estimate, 380,000 Palestinians left Kuwait during and after the war, travelling to Israel and Jordan, the only two countries that would let them in.<sup>33</sup> The ruling Al-Sabah family of Kuwait waited a long time to forgive Husayn for backing Saddam. Relations did not improve until 1996 when King Husayn distanced Jordan from Iraq and called for a new government in Baghdad. On September 1, 1999 a Jordanian ambassador finally returned to represent his country in Kuwait.

Jordan suffered greatly during the war as a result of the embargo on Iraq. The IMF and World Bank estimated that Jordan lost \$1 Billion in 1990 as a result of the lost trade with Iraq.<sup>34</sup> Like the Palestinians, many Jordanian citizens working in Gulf countries were forced out as a result of Husayn's perceived alliance with Iraq. 200,000 Jordanian citizens returned to Jordan after the war and the Gulf countries stopped all aid to Jordan. The value of the Jordanian Dinar fell 20 percent as a result

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 358.

<sup>34</sup> Bishara A. Bahbah, "The Economic Consequences on Palestinians" in *The Palestinians and the War in the Gulf*, Washington DC: The Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine, 1991.

of the crisis.<sup>35</sup> The United States punished Husayn for his refusal to support the coalition by temporarily suspending all military and economic aid to Jordan. In April 1991, Jordan resumed its oil shipments from Iraq. Despite the embargo, the UN allowed Jordan to take Iraqi oil as debt repayment for its help during the Iraq/Iraq war. Jordan also resumed shipments of goods to Iraq, though the amount dropped from a prewar high of 6,000 tons per day to less than 2,000.<sup>36</sup>

Despite his stance in the war, Husayn was not estranged from the United States for long. In late April 1991, while US troops were still in Iraq, Secretary of State Baker visited King Husayn in Aqaba. According to Baker, the King was desperate to get back in to the good graces of the US. Without Saudi financial help, and with the Iraqi embargo still in place, Jordan was in desperate financial straits. Husayn asked Baker to convince the Saudis to help Jordan. In return, Husayn promised to attend a conference to begin Arab peace negotiations with Israel.<sup>37</sup>

Jordan joined the Madrid Peace Talks in October 1991, in a move that returned King Husayn to US favor. In August 1992, Husayn went to Washington DC for treatment for the cancer that would ultimately kill him, and while there, he publicly denounced Saddam's refusal to cooperate with the UN in order to lift sanctions against his country. The king also met with Iraqi Kurdish opposition leaders. By the time of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's funeral in 1995, Husayn had a reputation as a great force for peace in the Middle East.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 21.

<sup>36</sup> Baram, "No New Fertile Crescent" p. 148.

<sup>37</sup> Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 451.

The Jordanian government has maintained that Jordan was neutral during the Gulf War and not on the side of Saddam Husayn. The official government account of the crisis is that Husayn was “*clearly an apologist for peace and not for Iraq.*”<sup>38</sup> The document places blame on “*an orchestrated campaign to misrepresent Jordan as the ally and supporter of Iraq*” which succeeded in “*souring relations between the United States and Jordan.*”<sup>39</sup> One can still argue whether Jordan was neutral or actually on the side of Iraq. Husayn did nothing officially to actively aid Iraq during the war. But Jordan did not join the coalition or even denounce the invasion of Kuwait.

A Jordan diplomat questioned by this author maintained that Jordan’s pro-Iraq stance stemmed from the threat posed by Iran in the Gulf, and the fact that Iraq was the only Arab country capable of defending the rest of the Arabs from Iran.<sup>40</sup> The diplomat maintained that King Husayn never supported the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, he simply tried to find a peaceful solution to the crisis.

Uriel Dann has written that Syria was as much a threat to Jordan as Israel or Iran in 1990.<sup>41</sup> This view is somewhat overstated. By 1989, the Soviet Union was exhausted from its debacle in Afghanistan and was beginning to implode. The Soviets were the exclusive suppliers of the Syrian military, and the Syrians were suffering as a result. The Syrian army was large, but without spare parts from the Soviets, it was not as much of a threat as it had been in 1970.

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<sup>38</sup> Jordanian Government, White Paper, p. 12.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Hasan Abu Nimah, Jordanian ambassador to the UN, Princeton University, March, 1999.

<sup>41</sup> See Uriel Dann, *King Hussein's Strategy of Survival*, p. 54.

Regardless of which country posed the biggest threat to Jordan, Husayn certainly did not have many choices during the conflict. Jordan was a weak country squeezed between two military powers, Israel and Iraq. When Saddam Husayn threatened to destroy Israel, the US and other coalition powers had to restrain Israel from retaliating for Iraqi Scud attacks on Tel Aviv. Some analysts believed that Saddam would put Iraqi troops in Jordan to provoke Israel to attack him and force the Arab members of the coalition to side with him in a war with Israel.<sup>42</sup> Had King Husayn aligned himself with the coalition, Saddam might have been more likely to take this risky course of action.

The policy of political liberalization in response to the economic downturn is a possible reason for Husayn's tacit alignment with Iraq. But whatever the cause of the liberalization, pro-Iraqi sentiment in Jordan was strong. Jordanians and Iraqis had a close economic relationship in 1990. Jordanians, both East and West Bankers, believed that while the invasion of Kuwait might not have been completely justifiable, the Kuwaitis were corrupt and arrogant and did not deserve their staggering wealth. Saddam was a Robin Hood-style character, redistributing the Kuwaiti oil wealth to poorer Arabs. Many Jordanians also believed that US troops on Saudi soil constituted an invasion just like the one in Kuwait. The people staged huge pro-Saddam demonstrations, and Husayn could not stop them. Had Husayn returned to political repression, his people would have been outraged. In order to maintain control and stay viable as the leader of Jordan, he had no choice but to risk the wrath of the US and the Gulf Arabs and tacitly support Saddam.

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<sup>42</sup> Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict: 1990-1991*, p. 105.

Husayn reaped great popular support within Jordan for his refusal to bend to US pressure. Crowds carried his picture along with Saddam's during pro-Iraqi demonstrations. Husayn's army, the cornerstone of his support, had trained and worked with Iraqi troops, and sentiment within the army and the internal security apparatus was pro-Iraqi. The king would have lost the support of these vitally important institutions had he ordered them to suppress the demonstrations.

In previous crises in Jordan, King Husayn could call upon his traditional power bases to support a decision that was extremely unpopular outside Jordan. He believed he could also withstand any internal dissent. But the Gulf War allied Palestinians with East-Bank Jordanians, liberals with conservatives, and Islamists with Communists, all against the coalition and in support of Saddam. Husayn could not have gone against all these groups and still depended on his army to support him. He decided to risk the short-term wrath of the US and Gulf Arabs to maintain his domestic support.

Husayn showed from his actions in 1990 that he was playing for short-term survival, and weighing the severity of the threats against him. He believed that could mend his strategic external alliances after the immediate crisis. But to survive, he first had to shore up his internal alliances. Husayn's monarchy could not last without the support of the majority of his subjects, and so he took the proper risks. It is possible, even likely that Husayn told Bush, that he could not back the coalition and survive as king of Jordan. The fact that the US Secretary of State paid Jordan an official visit two months after the end of the Gulf war implies that Bush's anger with Husayn did not last. The end result showed that the position the king took was extremely successful.

### Conclusion

During his 46- year rule, King Husayn survived many challenges to his rule, from both internal and external sources. In the first years of his reign, Husayn learned the importance of popular support and learned that he was vulnerable if he did not have it. In 1955-56, he realized that if he joined the Baghdad Pact, the popular mood in Jordan would quickly turn against him and he could lose his throne. After withdrawing from the agreement, he further shored up his support by dismissing Glubb Pasha, who was the largest symbol of continuing British domination in Jordan.

Husayn also learned that he had to be prepared to temporarily forego support in order to meet challenges to his rule. He acquiesced to the PLO for as long as he could because he knew that they were popular inside Jordan. But once he realized they were challenging the legitimacy of his rule, he acted, without regard to the popular reaction. Husayn also risked the loss of support from other Arab countries because of his actions against the *fedayeen*. But he calculated that the threat posed by the guerrillas was more immediate than that posed by the loss of popular support for his rule within Jordan or outside support from the wealthy Arab Gulf States. In the end, his actions were worth the risks. Most Jordanians, Palestinians included, did not back the PLO, and he was not ostracized by other Arab states for very long.

Husayn's Gulf War policy was perhaps the greatest gamble: the loss of support of his pro-Iraqi population or the loss of his most powerful benefactor, the United States. He reacted to the most immediate threat, loss of popular support, by tacitly supporting Iraq and then resolved to later do whatever it took to get back in the favor of the US. During the period of January through March 1991, the king walked a tightrope, trying to

be seen by his people to support Iraq without seeming too militantly anti-US to the Bush administration. His January speech is evidence of his mastery of being able to reach out to both sides.

In the final analysis, Husayn was an extremely successful ruler in a region beset by turmoil. He clearly believed that Jordan could only survive under a Hashimite king. This thesis is not meant as an indictment of his reign. The stability of his regime has provided Jordan with the opportunity for social and economic advancement. Given the country's lack of resources and assets, its internal divisions, its position in a "tough neighborhood," and its leadership's limited room for political maneuver, Jordan is achieving remarkable gains. If Abdullah can continue his father's legacy, his ability to solve short-term problems and react to threats while also balancing his internal and external support, he can perhaps equal his father's success. Chess is a Middle Eastern game, but so is backgammon. It is backgammon, with its short-term moves and awareness of the effects of chance, which Husayn's long rule most closely resembles.



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